THE

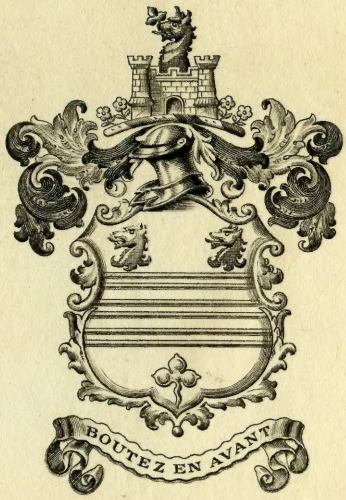
HUNTING COUNTRIES

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

By Brooksby.

VOL. II.



Stanley Leonard Barry

Stanley Barry

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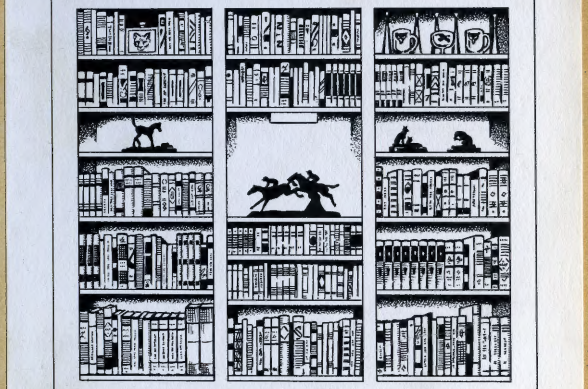

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JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS

THE

HUNTING COUNTRIES

OF

ENGLAND,

THEIR FACILITIES, CHARACTER, AND REQUIREMENTS.

A GUIDE TO HUNTING MEN.

By BROOKSBY.

VOLUME II.

PARTS IV., V., AND VI.

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HUNTING COUNTRIES

OF

ENGLAND.

VOL. II.

PART IV.

THE BADSWORTH.*

North of the Grove and South of the Bramham Moor, the Badsworth Hunt vies with the latter Hunt and Lord Fitzwilliam in pushing foxhunting as far as possible into the western wilds and coalpits of Yorkshire. An old country, of long-established repute and sporting history, it has suffered, and is suffering, much, under the relentless strides of trade development; year by year the area for the horse and hound is more narrowed; year by year more lines cross the face of the country, and its best features become more seared and distorted. Yet it holds its head up bravely; maintains an establishment of the highest class; and takes the field as often and fully as

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 9, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

efficiently as ever. To be plain, the Badsworth Country, once almost the pick of Yorkshire, is now so cut to pieces and harassed by the encroachments of railways competing in the coal-and-iron interest, that it has lost much of the free open character which constituted its charm. This will be patent enough in a glance at the map; and, besides all the havoc that is there denoted by the red lines marking railways of varied denomination, still another steam-track is in progress to connect Hull and Barnsley, and to spoil the pleasant district of which Hemsworth is the centre.

While the map is in your hand you may note the surroundings of the Badsworth. East and south its boundaries are pretty nearly delineated by the course of the Don. The Aire river separates it on the north from the Bramham Moor; and it may go as far as it can to the westward, where Huddersfield and its busy populace check it at one point and hilly moorland meets it at another. From Doncaster to Wakefield, gives the best general idea of the locale of the Hunt; and whoever has seen a Leger run, or even read the yearly accounts of it, must be well aware that this is, to say the least, a well-populated district. The "tyke" is admittedly a sporting animal; but his presence, in too great force, must necessarily be rather against, than in favour of, the prospects of sport. He comes out in prominent strength—himself on foot, his superior officers on horseback, whenever hounds are in his neighbourhood and sufficient excuse is found available for breaking into the week's work. This is specially the case on a Saturday, when if he

did not go a hunting, he would probably be driven to the skittle-ground to kill the day: and consequently on a Saturday Wakefield, Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster and Pontefract turn him and his masters in great numbers to the hunting-field.

The Badsworth Hunt dates as far back as 1720; and the present pack (the property of the country) was founded in 1817 by Mr. Thomas Hodgson, from the Kennels of Lord Lonsdale, Lord Yarborough, Sir Bellingham Graham, Mr. Fox, Mr. Villebois, Lord Fitzwilliam, etc. etc. Just previous to this period, Mr. Chaworth Musters (*grandpére*), and Sir Bellingham Graham had each brought his pack to the country for a couple of seasons.

There are now some sixty couple of hounds in the kennels at Badsworth, about three miles from Pontefract. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday are the hunting days—with an occasional bye-day, which the Master takes himself with a pack of which the nucleus is kept for this special purpose. Mr. Wright assumed the Mastership on the death of Mr. Hope-Barton in 1876; manages the country and maintains the establishment with the greatest liberality. It is safe to say that no M.F.H. in England keeps up a stable of such proportions. He has sometimes no less than a hundred and twenty horses in his stable!

The country, like most of Yorkshire, acknowledges to a good deal of plough—though it is by no means entirely arable, nor is this arable particularly holding. On the whole it is a fair scenting country, especially on the east and west, where it treats itself more freely

to grass of one kind or another. Its coverts are chiefly natural, though several nice new gorses have lately been planted in the low ground to the east. The frequency and propinquity of the coverts in many parts of the country make killing a fox often a matter of difficulty—though this is a difficulty that may arise anywhere from the blessing of plenty of foxes.

The fences of the country by no means come under any single classification; but can best be alluded to in touching upon the various districts. It seems to us, however, that all over Yorkshire a habit exists of digging the ditches very wide and deep.

The country naturally divides itself into four sections, differing considerably in soil, surface, and character generally.

First, the east, or "low country," is wild, flat, half-drained, in parts nearly all rough grass (especially about Fishlake)—with unkempt ragged fences and ditches that are never cleaned or cared for. More sport is seen here than in any other part of the Badsworth territory, for there is generally a capital scent and the foxes are stout and straight. Here and there a big open drain is met with—putting a strong test upon horse and rider. Still, a clean-cut drain is often a pleasanter fence than a brook two feet less in breadth. For, while the former declares itself honestly and throws down a fair challenge to a horse's jumping power, the latter not only varies in width every few yards, but its banks are often treacherous, rotten or shelving. The one you can ride at knowing that if you can clear a certain

number of feet you are safe over; the other is frequently a trap which is especially laid for the confident and well mounted. The Lake drain is a notable instance of the former jump; and holds a place in the Hunt much akin to that of the Whissendine with the Cottesmore.

There are many strong good coverts in the "low country"—woods of manageable size. Among these are Blane Woods and Blane-Hall Wood (Mr. Bateson Yarborough's), Fenwick (Mr. F. B. Frank's), the Wolmersley coverts (Lady Hawke's), and the Owston Woods (Mr. P. B. Cooke's). There is also a fine gorse covert at Fishlake, the property of Lord Houghton, and productive of much good sport. The chief meets are Balne Cross Roads, Womersley, Askern, and Moss—the last three being stations on the encroaching lines of railway, and Monday or Thursday is the day for this side.

Secondly, round Doncaster is light undulating plough on limestone, carrying scarcely so good a scent except in wet weather, but with capital woods for shelter. The meets are Robin Hood's Well, Marr, Red House, &c., and the principal coverts are those of Mr. G. C. Yarborough's at Barnsdale, Skelbrook (Mr. Nevile's), Brodsworth Woods (Mr. Thelluson's), the Melton Woods (Mr. Montague's), and Burgwallis (Mr. Anne's).

Thirdly, or in continuation of the centre of the country, is the Hemsworth district, where a better soil and a greater sprinkling of grass is to be found. The neighbourhood ot Shafton is particularly good, and in the Hunt is spoken of as a mimic Leicester-

shire. Hemsworth Station is a very favourite meet; and used always to be on a Saturday, but a change of days is said to be in contemplation. From this fixture Hagg Wood (Mr. C. Fitzwilliam's), Sir Lionel's Gorse, or the Shafton Gorses (Lord Galway's) may be drawn. Other meets are Shafton Two Gates, Ackworth Moor Tops, Ringstone Hill, &c., and other coverts are Chevet (Sir Lionel Pilkington's), Hoar Park, Nostell (Mr. R. Winn's), Frystone (Lord Houghton's), Badsworth (Mr. R. H. Jones'), Burnt Wood (Mr. Dymond's), New Park Spring (Mr. Foljambe's), Hootan Wood (Mr. Warde Aldam's), and Stapleton (Mrs. Barton's).

The fourth section of the country is the west, which is hilly and thickly wooded, and owns to a fair proportion of grass. It is very necessary here to be mounted on a horse that will jump a stone wall, which is a frequent fence in the neighbourhood. And especially is this the case should a fox take you straight for the moors, over the wild open country intervening. In January, 1880, a notable instance of such a run was sketched in *The Field*. On the occasion alluded to they ran a ten-mile point from Haigh Wood, hounds going on with their fox till at the end of three hours they were lost in the darkness, thirty miles from home. This western district is now thickly populated by colliers—a keen breed of sportsmen, or, as they term themselves, "pure hunters"—who will often turn out to run for miles with hounds. The principal western meets are Cawthorne, Woolley Edge, Darton, and Haigh Station; and these are usually on a Monday. The chief coverts are Bretton (Mr. W. B. Beaumont's),

Cawthorne (Mr. W. S. Stanhope's), and Woolley (Mr. G. Wentworth's).

Should you be minded to see the Badsworth at work, Doncaster or Pontefract offers the most commanding points and the best accommodation. The Great Northern will land you at either in three hours and a half to four hours from London. A hunter, strong and well bred, is necessary in the Badsworth country throughout; and the natives have always shown themselves equal to the occasion by breeding horses of this type for their own riding. Of late years, however, the farmers of Yorkshire, as everywhere else, have been glad to dispose of anything worth the attention of the extraneous buyer; and are much less frequently seen riding horses of the stamp and quality for which the county has been so famous. Indeed, fewer farmers are seen out hunting at all now than in former years; and, altogether, the Badsworth field is generally a limited one, except, as above-mentioned, on holiday Saturday.

It should be noted, as a feature of the country, that the River Went almost bisects it in its course from west to east. Only near its source is it comfortably jumpable. Soon afterwards it developes to proportions demanding ford or bridge, and constituting a source of anxiety when hounds are seen to be heading towards it.

THE SOUTHDOWN.*

The Londoner may fix upon many a worse quarter whence to enjoy his two or three days hunting in the week than Brighton—little as we are accustomed to associate that tripper's Paradise with vigorous field-sports. 'Tis of foxhunting, of course, we are about to speak; for, while in no way holding with Mr. Jorrocks' graphically-expressed contempt for "currant-jelly dogs"—on the contrary, believing in them heartily as the young foxhunter's best instructors—we hold harehunting to be a sport without a literature. "Puss 'unting"—once more to borrow a phrase out of the mouth of the immortal one—is not a thrilling pursuit in the abstract. Even the chronicle of a fine run necessarily reads about as exciting as those mysterious records which reach us now and again from St. Andrews or Westward Ho—where Jamie Junr. has dribbled a ball in and out of a series of little holes in the ground, in fewer strokes than on any previous occasion in the stirring annals of golf. There may be something harrier-like in the atmosphere of Brighton—and much that is creditable in the connection. But

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 22, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

this is not our present subject. The professed theme under the head of Hunting Countries is how to lead the Londoner afield for recreation or residence. And so we come to Brighton to quaff ozone, tempered, as taste may prompt, by Zoedone or Perrier Jouet—and to take our turn with the Southdown. Hire if you like at Brighton. It is cheap in the short run, if not in the long. A hireling is the best of mounts over a Down country. His life has been spent in one continued gallop with a loose rein. He has learned the limit of his powers, or inclination, and will not go one stride beyond either. In the after-glow of a gallop on a hireling you may dine like a Briton; have no care while you sip your coffee as to whether your recent mount is eating his corn, and in the morning know no agony over filled legs or fevered frame. The sovereigns (often four now where it used to be two—though the Brighton and Lewes tariff remains, I believe, unaltered) are the only blurr upon a pleasant past. R.M.D.—a short quick process—cheap and often disagreeable. Ask the British Subaltern on his return from a spree. Ask the man who backs favourites. A quick settlement, and sober method. This the moral. The practice advocated in the special instance is, after all—Keep your own horses wherever you are. Put up with your lame ones and your disappointments. Admit to yourself as much as you please that, when things go wrong (and when *don't* they go wrong in a hunting establishment except when owner doesn't care if he stays at home or not?) that you are the one unlucky man in the world—howl to yourself if you like that Fortune has for years been

picking you out as her special victim. Yet depend upon it you are better off relying upon yourself, though you may have to grind your teeth through many a crisis. Only stable philosophy this—though no restriction is placed upon its being applied to every-day life, and no patent has been taken out for the principle.

Brighton, as everyone knows, is little more than an hour's journey from London; and the Southdown will give you either a scurry over the open downs, which stretch some thirty-five or forty miles from Shoreham to Eastbourne, or more solid foxhunting in the stiff vale farther inland. A racing burst over the hills—a flying scent and never a fence—is a thing almost of itself. The Gorse coverts lie in many instances three or four miles apart, and invariably hold foxes. Hounds seldom fail to get away at their fox's brush; the downs almost always carry a scent; and thus a point-to-point race is the ordinary result—he who can, with judgment, gallop fastest and ride lightest being in all probability nearest to hounds, who in their turn will often more than hold their own with the horses and generally burst up their fox.

The Downs or "the hill," and the Weald or "Low Country" are the two natural divisions of the country—the former being marked on the map as the Southdowns and stretching along the sea-coast the whole length of the country, the latter a strong clay valley divided on the north from the Crawley and Horsham by the little stream of the Adur. The Southdown country was originally a part of the East Sussex—the present line of demarcation on the east being the north road from Hailsham.

The Down meets being, with few exceptions, those nearest to Brighton, are naturally the most fully attended—even if sport is not the only influence which brings so many scarlet coats and shapely riding-habits to a meet of the foxhounds. It is pleasant to inhale the crisp breeze on the hilltop, even if you are not minded to dip into each valley and struggle over each crest in the mad rush after the spotted dogs. For many eyes too there is attraction in a red coat; but in justice to itself it should be brought home before evening has thrown a veil over window and promenade. And who shall deny that a habit is the most becoming of all garments? But, whether to sportman or lounger there should be something stirring and exhilarating in a quick sharp gallop in merry company over the smooth mossy turf, or light tilled soil almost as firm as turf, which form the surface of the downs. And the day seldom passes when the Southdown meet "on the Hill" that they cannot offer such a gallop. Should, however, a fox take it into his head, as he often will, to strike suddenly downwards off the high ground into the vale beneath, it becomes at once a question of most serious consideration as to whether you should follow hounds or not. If he is really bound for the Weald, the sooner you slide and scramble down the steep descent the better. But should he have merely taken a turn down in order to twist back again, you only put yourself completely behind by getting under the hill—which you will find impossible to re-climb again after hounds, till they are far over the brow and the order of the chase, as far as pursuers go, has been com-

pletely reversed. More often, however, fox and hounds will run along under the hillside while you are able to gallop on the top; and the slope being quite free from timber you may see with ease all that the pack is doing. A vale fox is more likely to take to the hill than a hill fox to descend to the low country—a rule that holds good nearly everywhere. And as there are no large coverts on the downs, hounds are there generally able to account for their fox—when once they have been on terms sufficient to take the steel out of him. But in the case of the Southdown hill and vale, again, there is the attraction of the strong woods below—such as Plashet, Abbott's Wood, and Laughton on the east, and Toddington, Danny, Newtimber, and Wellingore on the west; and a woodland bred fox, found on the downs, is pretty sure to make his point back as soon as he can.

The Low Country is, to adopt a homely but not altogether inapplicable simile, as widely different from the downs as cheese is from chalk. A strong clay soil is to a great extent laid down in good honest turf; the rest is plough that rides deep and holding. For instance, both sides of the railway as you travel from Keymer Junction to Lewes are all beautiful grass; as it is also from Glynd to the Laughton Woods. Moving on by Chiddingly again we get into a stiff deep country, while on the west of Henfield district is grass and plough mixed. The large lowland coverts are mostly full of foxes—the Chiddingly neighbourhood being especially notable in this respect. The fences of the weald call for a clever horse rather than a flyer; the hedge is generally on a low bank, always

with a ditch on one side, frequently on both; so that a horse must be able to steady himself, measure his stride accurately, and be prepared if necessary to drop his hind legs for a second spring. Field is connected with field by means of what are known as bar-ways—gateways with draw-rails, to wit.

The Southdown Hunt has lately experienced a change of mastership, and, with it, an alteration in the days of hunting. Under Mr. Streatfield, who was Master for eleven years (showing excellent sport, hounds took the field three days one week, and four the next). Under the new master, Mr. C. Brand, it is, we understand, proposed to hunt four days a week regularly. Hitherto the method of distributing the days has been much as follows—Monday and Saturday have been devoted to the weald or northern half of the country, wherein Glynd (the residence of The Speaker), Firle, Alciston, Seaford, Beddingham, Barcombe, Chailey (Mr. I. Ingram's), Newick (Mr. W. Sclater's), Street Green, &c., are frequent meets. Lord Gage is the largest landed proprietor in these parts; is a staunch supporter of the Hunt; and owns several of the best coverts in the Hunt, including Plashet and Abbott's Wood. Wednesday is generally spent in the south-eastern corner of the country near Eastbourne, with such meets as Polegate, Jevington, Eastbourne, East or West Dean, &c. Friday is always a Brighton meet, and means a large field, at any rate for the early part of the day. Seven miles from Brighton is about the outside distance for a ride to covert on a Friday, and brings in such fixtures as Offham (Sir G. Schiffner's), Stanmer Park (Lord Chi-

chester's), Portslade, Erringham, the Dyke, Newmarket Arch, Newhaven, Danny Park (Mr. W. Campion's).

In conclusion, the kennels are at Ringmer, about two miles out of Lewes, which itself is a very good and central quarter whence to hunt with the Southdown; and the Hounds are the property of the Country, held as such by trustees.

THE EAST ESSEX.*

The East Essex can scarcely be termed a "fashionable country"; but it can lay claim to being a fairly open and a very rideable one. It has plenty of nice coverts: and under the management of the late master (Col. Jelf Sharp) the stock of foxes has yearly improved. It is not so deep a country as its neighbours the Essex or the Essex Union. On the other hand it does not carry as good a scent as either. Like all the county of Essex, its entire surface is under tillage. But the steamplough is much less in use here; and its soil is naturally of a much lighter description. Light, often sandy, plough is its main characteristic; and though the crops often flourish as on a garden bed, a burning scent is a very rare phenomenon indeed. In a dry autumn or hot spring there is scarcely any scent at all; and only when the ground is completely saturated, and mud and water splash up at every stride, can hounds really run with vigour. Last season (1880—81), when soaking rain followed a long cleansing frost, the East Essex had several long and fast runs—notably in

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 17, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

their south-eastern, or Maldon district—and killed their foxes at the end. Hounds in such a country, it is needless to say, must be able to keep their noses down at all times, and puzzle the line out for themselves. And with a field of the proportions generally seen with them, they have every chance of doing it. The number of resident gentry who hunt with the East Essex is comparatively, or rather positively, small; and were it not for the farmers — men of sporting instinct and substantial means—the Hunt would lead but an attenuated existence. As it is, it leans for support upon a few large landowners, and upon the whole body of farmers throughout its length. Thirty-nine miles—from the river Blackwater and its outlet into the Mouth of the Thames in the south, up to the River Stour in the north—is its extent; while its average width, as it runs up between the territories of The Essex and the Essex and Suffolk, is about fifteen miles.

Braintree, till lately the site of the Kennels (and about an hour and three-quarters from Liverpool-street, London), is the chief centre of the Hunt—though Halstead is a place of local importance, and Witham is about half an hour nearer London. Chelmsford, which, *magnis componere parva,* may be termed the Melton of Essex, lies just outside its border, and almost at the junction point of the three Hunts (The Essex, Essex Union, and East Essex). Indeed, Chelmsford is far and away the best hunting quarter in the county. It commands the Ruthings for fox or stag, and holds all else in the province in its grasp. We are within the truth in asserting that

the hard-riding men of Essex have a very strong leaning towards "the sport incarcerate," as Mr. Burnand has termed staghunting. It gives them their gallop for certain; and is at its best when foxhunting fails. For, when the fallows are dry and they can skim the crust, staghounds leather along through the dust as heartily as foxhounds under a clearing shower and a rising glass. And Essex is very much an expeditionary ground, where men steal a day and hope for a gallop. If they get it, they go back to Town happy. How are they so likely to get it as with the staghounds (Mr. Petre's to wit); who start at a given time, with a scent that never fails—and most often, be it confessed, with a goodly luncheon to drive the laggards up to the head. It is just at the worst scenting times (autumn and spring) that Essex is at its best as a riding-ground. It is then that the fences are to be flown instead of floundered. It is then that the broad fields can be galloped, when at other times they must be trotted over. The fences almost throughout are built for a flippant style of jumping that the ground too often forbids. They ask you to go fast. The ground bids you go slow; and if you treat its advice with contempt, you may find yourself stopped altogether. Thus, when the ground is deep there is nothing for it but to go steadily and give your horse every chance of arriving at his jumps collected and unexhausted. The fences are all of one pattern—at least in the Ruthings and in the East Essex Country—viz., low hedges on little banks, with a ditch of varying width and depth on one side or the other. In most in-

stances an ordinary hunter can fly the lot; and it seldom happens but that a fairly clever one cannot get over, either at a single spring or by making use of the bank for passing foothold. And an Essex fence has two very wholesome advantages. If it is to be jumped at all, it is probably of one calibre along its whole length: and, again, it is seldom grown of such a height that you are cut off from seeing hounds. Timber, in the form of post-and-rails, is almost unknown in Essex. Ambition may occasionally prompt the daring ones to jump a gate: but the Essex gate, though stoutly built, is by no means of such a size as is found necessary in a grazing country. A deep lane will often interrupt the even tenour of your way—calling upon you to "go round," or to slide down a lofty bank and scramble on to a similar one beyond. But, as a rule, Essex is to be ridden over, and is an excellent school—inasmuch as the pupil is seldom called upon for stupendous effort, while the penalty of a failure is only a roll on to a soft surface, or, at most, half a sovereign invested as spade money on behalf of your horse.

Under the mastership of Col. Jelf Sharp (who, as above-mentioned, has just resigned office, after having held it for five years), hounds took the field professedly five days a fortnight. Mr. Bryce, of Durwards, near Witham, is the new Master; and the country will, we understand, in future be hunted twice a week. The kennels, too, will probably be moved elsewhere. At present they are about half a mile from Braintree, where the late master has resided. A bye-day has also been of very frequent occurrence, though the

pack (Col. Jelf Sharp's property) has only numbered about six and twenty couple of working hounds—a fair proof of good kennel management. Thus all last season when the weather allowed, hounds were out on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

The East Essex Country presents no great variety, or contrasts of feature, throughout its extent. The same kind of soil and fence is found practically everywhere. The only really big woods lie in the centre of the country; there are natural coverts of handy size scattered over the north; and perhaps the best-scenting ground is in the south-east. Foxes would seem to favour the middle and the southern half of the country in preference to the north, in spite of there not being nearly as much game for them to feed upon in the latter as in the former—an anomaly that, we have noticed, is not entirely confined to the county of Essex.

The coverts on the north are woods of a nice size—perhaps fifty to a hundred acres—at a distance from each other such as should not only admit of, but conduce towards, a run. Among the coverts in this direction are those of Burbrooke Park (Mr. Smoothey's), Twelveacres, Lord's Fields (two most useful little woods in Suffolk belonging to a good preserver, Mr. Elwes), Finchingfield, Redbeards and Grassels (under the care of Mr. Goodchild). Lord's Field, near Stoke, is the northernmost meet in the Hunt, and has led to many good runs; Steeple Bumpstead lies well in the open country, with only small coverts within hail, and every opportunity of running a long distance. The White Hart at

Yeldham is for Redbeards and Grassels; Bulmer is a fixture more to the north-east for the good coverts in its neighbourhood.

Coming to the centre of the country, we find the biggest woodlands of the Hunt situated about midway between Braintree and Colchester—the chain comprising Mark's Hall (a covert of perhaps a thousand acres belonging to Mrs. Honeywood and Mr. Hanbury, both good friends to the sport) and Chalkney (another well-preserved wood of about half the size, and belonging to Mr. Cawardine). Chappel is the ordinary meet for Chalkney Wood; and these are the only very extensive woodlands in the East Essex territory. To the westward a frequent meet is Shalford, the residence of Mr. Marriott, whose father was for five and twenty years Master of this Country, and where there is also a good covert. Finchingfield Park is in the same direction; and, moving southward, Bushey Common, two miles from the town of Braintree, is for Hazleton, one of the best coverts in the Hunt. Terling is for the Terling coverts (Lord Kayleigh's) and Duke's Wood.

In the south, or rather south-east, of the country, are Sir Charles Du Cane's coverts at Braxted Park—the only hilly ground in the Hunt; and beyond these are Mr. Barrett's coverts at Langford. Both these places have of late proved themselves highly for foxes and for sport. From the latter coverts two famous runs came off in one day last season, viz., a seven and a ten mile point—each with a kill at the end on the banks of the Blackwater.

THE BRAMHAM MOOR.*

VERY prominent among the Yorkshire packs is that of the Bramham Moor, which, having been formed nearly a century ago by the grandfather of the present Master, has been in the possession of Mr. Lane Fox for the last thirty-three years. For a short time it passed out of the family into the hands of the then Lord Harewood, to be given back in 1848 to the late Mr. Lane Fox—who died a few months afterwards, leaving it to his son. We have no hesitation in saying that the Bramham Moor Pack has few superiors among the leading kennels of England. Here is the result, not only of a lifetime but of the lifetime of one of the most consummate judges of a foxhound in England, based upon the inherited possession of strains of blood from the best and oldest sources. For racing quality and sturdy strength—for clean light symmetry and thorough working points—the pack at Bramham stands out a living testimony to the management that has created it, and a study and delight to the novice who would learn how foxhounds should be built. Perhaps some

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 5. Also Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

of the most successful blood in the Kennel was an infusion thrown into it some two-and-thirty years ago, from the original stock of old John Warde's pack—Mr. Lane Fox having purchased a lot of five couple at Mr. Wyndham's sale at Tattersall's. This had been lying for some generations in Hampshire, when Mr. Lane Fox chanced upon the opportunity of buying five couple of the strain, which eventually was found to blend admirably with the Belvoir, Brocklesby, and other choice blood.

The Kennels in Bramham Park are the only part of the ancestral establishment now occupied—the beautiful old Hall having been destroyed by fire fifty-four years ago and now standing, a magnificent ruin, in the midst of all the same picturesque and carefully tended surroundings that then made it one of the ornaments of the neighbourhood. The walls, columns, and perfect proportions of the old mansion still remain uninjured; the avenues and gardens are as beautifully kept, and the park, as trim and well-timbered as ever. The stables are full of horses; and the Kennels hold by no means the least-valued heir-looms of the House. But the wind wanders where it will among the roofless and windowless walls; and a spreading tree has reared itself over the very doorstep.

The Bramham Moor Country is situated just to the west of the city of York—starting from within four or five miles of which, it runs westward between the York-and-Ainsty and the Badsworth as far towards Lancashire as moorland and collieries will permit. It finds natural boundaries to divide it on north and south and east from the other two packs named; but

to the west and south-west it is only limited by the impracticable nature of the ground and the inimical conditions of its industries. In fact, Mr. Stanford's colouring brush flashed far over the line when it flung itself beyond Knaresborough Forest and on to the wild western hills. Bradford and Leeds again in the south-west offer a background of railways and manufactories that are altogether impervious to the fox-hound. The river Nidd is the northern boundary of the country; the Aire forms the southern; and the Ouse marks part of the western.

Not a good scenting country is the Bramham Moor—the soil through the greater part of its extent being a thin covering over limestone. Nor can its foxes, where most plentiful, lay claim to straight necks or stout courage—a deficiency due, no doubt, to the number and propinquity of the coverts. These are the drawbacks to be laid at the door of the Bramham Moor; and applicable in the main to all the heart of the Country. To counterbalance them the Hunt can plume itself on a pack of hounds that will work a fox to death under all difficulties; and, further, can congratulate itself that, through the greater part of the Country there is an abundance rather than a dearth of foxes.

The best scenting ground in the Hunt (bar the rough western moorland, on which hounds never find themselves unless carried there by a travelling fox) is the north-eastern corner, which embraces a slip of the Ainsty Liberty—a name that may be briefly explained as applying to a bit of Yorkshire that belongs to one Riding and votes with another, that gives a title to

the York and Ainsty Hunt and lies partly in the Bramham Moor. Here the soil is deep, the coverts are small and the ditches are big. Most of the Bramham Moor Country is easy to get over and about—the fences being low simple hedges with an ordinary ditch, the ground not too deep, and the woods soundly-rided. Indeed, when a large field is out (*i.e.*, a large field for Yorkshire—seldom more than seventy or eighty souls) the facility which the country offers for everyone keeping with hounds is in itself apt to create a difficulty for a huntsman, anxious to keep his hounds' noses down. The woods in the centre of the country, such as those of Harewood Park and about Bramham, are very extensive, but at the same time neither deep nor difficult. In the Ainsty corner, however, a very good horse is wanted; for, besides his having to gallop on through strong clay, the fence at the end of the field will often demand a tremendous effort — without any of the advantage of a rush at it over clean ground. The hedges are seldom bound and laid in the strong artistic fashion that in the shires tends doubly to advance the study of anatomy—finding practice, on the one hand, for the country bonesetter, and, on the other, drawing the attention of the novice to the all-necessary subject of shoulders. But they are strong-grown and closely trimmed, and of a height that often just conceals a yawner till your horse's spring is all but defined. You perhaps perceive the gulf before he does; but this makes the situation none the pleasanter, for it is too late to urge him without throwing him out of his stride, and the tension of

nerve is only prolonged. Hock and quarters, back and ribs, are the cardinal points of a hunter for this region—if he is to keep his rider with hounds, and himself on his legs. If he can add pace and shoulders to these other qualifications—then he is fit to go anywhere in the world. The Bramham Moor is not a great horse-breeding district—though its neighbour the Holderness at one time had a great reputation on that score. The farmers do not lend their attention to breeding a high class of horse for sale; while those who hunt (and their number is but limited) have more often aimed at being comfortably carried about their farms than at earning the distinction of being well mounted at the covert side. The largest fields are naturally found at the fixtures nearest the towns—Harrogate and York to wit. Leeds is a manufacturing rather than a sporting place; but Harrogate not only finds a strong contingent of its own, but brings in a gathering, by road and rail from over the border. York, too, is always full of hunting men; and has ever been popular with all soldiers of becoming proclivities.

The west of the country, as already mentioned, gradually merges into moorland and stonewalls: with a great scent on the open hills whenever hounds are tempted there. As a matter of fact, they do not profess to go beyond a line drawn from about Darley in the north to Burley in the south (from Burley to Leeds again, being scarcely within the pale of fox-hunting). Yet, as a sample of what may occasionally happen, the outline of a great and enjoyable run of last season (1880-81) is worth following on the map.

By good luck their fox took them along the narrow valley of the river Wharfe, and kept them on smooth meadows for miles, when a quarter of a mile on either side would have put them on rough, almost impracticable ground. Finding at Almscliffe Winn (winn, be it remembered, being synonymous with the southern term gorse), they ran from out of their home country right on to the Moors. Passing Stainburn, Leathley, Farney Hall, Weston, and Denton Park, they killed their fox beyond Bow Wood Gill, near Middleton Lodge, after a run of an hour and twenty-five minutes and a point of nine and a half miles. The shepherds in this wild region ran down delighted to greet the unaccustomed sight of a pack of hounds in cry. They had been taught to consider the fox their common enemy, to be smoked out, or worried with terriers, whenever he was to be found; and this run was after a well-known old fox that had escaped them when they slaughtered his mate and cubs.

Another very long run of the same season (10½-mile point) began not far from the same source. On this occasion they found at the Cocked Hat Winn, at Spofforth Haggs, left Spacey House Winn on the left, past Beckwithshaw, through Haverah Park and Hampsthwaite to Swarcliffe Hall, where they lost their fox in a strange country—and it is surmised he found refuge in the Craggs.

The hunting days of the Bramham Moor are Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. The river Wharfe runs across the middle of the country; and we can make use of it in pointing out approximately how the days are apportioned.

Monday is spent on the north of the Wharfe, or in the Harrogate district, and is, perhaps, looked upon as their best day—as the country is open, gently undulating, and with a fair admixture of grass amid the plough. And Monday, is, as already said, a popular day both with the Hunt and the outside public. Harewood Bridge is the great meet, and is the residence of Lord Harewood. From it are drawn his Swindon Woods, which are situated in the cream of the district. Kirkby Overblow and Stockeld Park (Mr. Middleton's) are other favourite fixtures.

Wednesday is employed on the south of the Wharfe, in the neighbourhood of Abberford and Bramham; where are big woods, a limestone soil, all plough in the open, an indifferent scent and plenty of foxes. The chief woodlands in the chain of those of Bramham, the woods of Parlington and Ringe (belonging to the Gascoigne Estate), Ledsham or the Boot-and-Shoe Plantations, the coverts of Ledstone Hall (Mr. Wheeler's), Micklefield Woods (the property of Mr. Bland of Kippax Park), Becca, and Hazle Wood, the property of the Vavasours of Hazlewood Castle—the last-named family and that of the Gascoignes being among the oldest and most historical in the county of York. The Cross Roads, Bramham Moor, Hook Moor, and the Boot-and-Shoe are among the most common meets on a Wednesday for the woods. Working on to Sherburn and Ferry Bridge we get into a more open and better scenting country; but, though nice level ground and good coverts extend eastward into the corner formed by the junction of

the Ouse and the Aire, there has not been any notable sport in this direction of late years.

Friday is, again, north of the Wharfe; is devoted to the north-east or Ainsty corner; and includes all the meets nearest to York. Beginning with a strong flat plough country by Thorpe Arch, Catterton, &c., and working round to Tockwith and Cowthorpe, we find ourselves in a mixed grass and plough district—the whole being stoutly fenced. Thorpe Arch, Bickerton Bar, Marston, and Whighill Village are some of the leading meets; and there are many capital coverts such as Hutton Thorns, Marston Winn, Wilstrip Wood, the Copmanthorpe Woods, and Ingmanthorpe Woods (the property of Mr. A. Montagu of Ingmanthorpe Hall). For this part of the country especially is a stout well bred horse a *sine quâ non*.

Saturday is on the Bardsey side of the Kennels, and is the second day given to the South of the Wharfe. Here we get to smaller coverts than about Bramham; but the scent improves but little, and the plough is still the reigning deity. About Bardsey itself, and Scarcroft, is the best of this district—being a pleasant open and undulating ground. The chief meets are Bardsey, Wike, Collingham Bar, and Wetherby Grange (Col. Gunter's place). Bramhope and Addle are about the westernmost fixtures; and, indeed, it is not often that hounds are advertised as wide as these. They draw as near to Leeds as Temple Newsam (Mrs. Meynell Ingram's); but immediately west of Leeds coal and iron have the country entirely to themselves.

For a visitor to see the pack at work, York is the point for which to take train. The journey from

London is a long one as a matter of distance rather than of time. Five hours from King's Cross will set you down there—with every day in the week mapped out for you. The Bramham Moor, the York and Ainsty, the Holderness and Lord Middleton's, hunt almost up to the City Walls. Yorkshire is an immense county, and is hunted religiously and thoroughly. But a month's sojourn in its capital will introduce you to most of its sport, if you ride to all meets within distance, and train once or twice a week.

THE EAST SUSSEX.*

Sussex is a county whose claims for description might, at least in the East, better be based on its summer than its winter charms; for it may well share with its sister county Kent the appellation of the Garden of England, and the very qualities which call forth the term are in themselves rather against than in favour of Foxhunting. East Sussex is very freely, in parts almost continuously, wooded. Apart from the woodlands, its rich deep soil, its strong and carefully-kept fences, its well dug hopgardens—all tend to beautify the country, but make it a difficult scene for the chase of the fox. It is hilly too; though not to a degree that interferes very much with riding. In summer one is led to exclaim rapturously of its beautiful wooded hills, of its fertile and picturesque valleys. In winter one must own with a groan that fertility has changed its name to deep clay, and that sylvan beauty is now better known as sticky woodland. But, for all that, fox-hunting is carried on, well managed and well supported. The land and covert owners take care of the

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 22 and 23, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

foxes; county-people and farmers join the sport in considerable numbers; and visitors to Hastings or St. Leonard's have it in their power to combine with the advantages of sea air the priceless benefits to be derived from exercise with hounds.

We compared Sussex to Kent a moment ago—but it was, mind, from a vernal not a venatic point of view; for, in comparing the country of the East Sussex with that of its neighbours the East Kent and the Tickham, we find the most widely different characteristics. In the two latter you may often ride a bee line for miles without encountering any necessity or even opportunity for jumping a single fence—and you are going, the while, on the top of the ground. In the East Sussex, on the contrary, you are in deep ground whether in covert or out; and, in the latter case, can only make progress through the medium of continual jumping. Many of the fences are almost too strong to be attempted; and recourse must be had to the "rackways" leading from field to field. If time does not admit of the less ambitious but safer plan of jumping off to pull the draw-rails down, they are generally to be jumped—and constant practice has made the men of East Sussex so familiar with them, that they hold them altogether in contempt, and, like Mr. Pigg, seldom stoop to getting off. Thus a man educated here, and seen with hounds elsewhere, is likely to be found steering for timber involuntarily—while others, brought up on the spot, are rather diverging from it. Where timber can—and must—be taken slowly, it *may* be (though the argument has at least two sides to it, and we pretend to lay down no

absolute dogma on the point), as Assheton Smith ever declared it, the safest fence possible. Even then it requires the provisos of good shoulders and a horse not blown. But in a country where strong split rails have generally to be galloped at, the unlucky incident of a fling on to firm turf must be the occasional result—leading to a total change of opinion as to the desirability of timber over any other kind of fence, Let this be as it may, they like timber in Sussex; they are obliged to jump it and most other obstacles at a slow pace—often at a walk or stand—and they must have a horse that can do it. Speed is, to say the least, a secondary consideration in a Sussex horse. Stamina and jumping power he must have—or else he must move over the border to the Downs. Only a hedge and ditch, is the description of a good East Sussex fence—but the word *only* must be as elastic as in the case of "only a face at the window." The ditch may have as wide a stretch as the qualifying adverb, and the hedge grows trimly and stoutly out of a rich soil—while the two together occur in deep ground and can only be approached delicately. Thus a horse must get as close to them as possible; and if he pauses when there, has a good look, and then heaves himself as far as he can—he may be the horse for East Sussex. He may, again, take a great many jumps in other fashion; but, if less flippant and airy, this is the safest and least fatiguing method—and answers best in the long run.

The East Sussex Country stretches along the sea-coast—eastward of the Southdown, which was originally included in the former Hunt—from about East-

bourne to Rye. Hastings is the most notable point in its extent; and forms the source of the largest fields, on the occasion of hounds meeting in its neighbourhood. Hastings is about two hours from London (Charing Cross or Victoria); and if your doctor or other motive agent, recommends Hastings or St. Leonard's as your winter resort, you are within reach of a good pack of hounds twice a week. These towns command all Mr. Frewen's meets; and if you do not care about bringing down horses of your own, you can hire something fit to carry you on the spot. Fox-hunting comes to an end at Rye, where the "Royal Military Canal" divides or marks the edge of the Romney Marsh—a broad area of flat grass, rendered impassable by dykes wide and unfathomable, which drain the land and divide the fields. Nor, again, is there any pack north of the river Rother, which forms the practical boundary of the East Sussex. *Why* such a stretch of ground should exist between the East Sussex and the Tickham, its residents alone could explain; for to all appearance this slip of country is, as regards coverts and practibility, quite as eligible for sport as either further north or south. The hills are very little steeper to climb; there is as much open space; and foxes are said to exist in improvable numbers. In East Sussex, with an established pack, there is no difficulty about foxes. About five-and-twenty litters is the usual annual return; which is certainly above the average in a two-days-a-week country. Among such large and frequent coverts foxes are difficult to kill; and it is not ground that often admits of bursting them up at starting. But for

all that it is more than a fair scenting country. Scent seldom brilliant, is yet generally holding; and a fox may be hunted longer after he has gone than in most countries.

The Kennels are at Northiam, close to the residence of the Master—Mr. E. Frewen—who has kept hounds there for the last ten years, and whose first efforts in direction of sport in his country were in the shape of a pack of staghounds (once a week). With these he had runs of immense length; but his predilections for the more legitimate sport soon reasserted themselves, and the present pack was developed from blood of Mr. Musters', the Fitzwilliam, Southdown, &c. Hunting twice a week, he suits his meets entirely to the requirements of the country; and, the Kennels being quite on the outside, the distances to covert and home are frequently very long. Home, in fact, is left out of the question, both as regards distance of fixture and direction of drawing. Near Hastings there exists a configuration of ground that demands frequent attention, and the most difficult labour—to wit, the undercliff at Fairlight. The almost perpendicular side of the cliff is hidden with covert, and is full of holes and crannies. Foxes swarm here; and it is almost impossible to kill them. Hounds can barely scramble about, and their only chance of getting together is when Reynard runs the sea beach for awhile. Of course as soon as he is blown, or tired of the fun on the shingle, he betakes himself again to the cliffside for refuge, and has all the best of it with his less agile persecutors. A boat on the water below is the easiest and surest way of watching events; but for

huntsman (who, by the way, is the Master) and staff, there is nothing for it but to tether horses and climb about the hillside on foot. Cliff-born foxes, found inland, naturally rush back at once to their native fastness; and were the huntsman ever so bent on slaughter, he would find spade and terrier only useless toys against such a stronghold.

Any attempt to enumerate by name the coverts of the East Sussex would be a work to puzzle the Ordnance Survey Department, and, even if achieved, would be useless to a visitor, and confusing to any but a second whip of many years' service in the country. Hop poles are grown and shooting-coverts maintained all over the country. The names of a few of the principal land-and-covert-owners—north, south, east, and west—will suffice in some degree to classify the resorts of the fox. Lord Ashburnham alone has some ten thousand acres of property very strongly wooded. The Master and Mr. Adamson own the principal woods in the north. In the south are Mr. Papillon at Crowhurst, and the Duke of Cleveland at Battle Abbey. In the East are Sir A. Ashburnham of Broomham, who is *con amore* the secretary of the Hunt, the Misses Brisco, of Coghurst, and Mr. Shadwell of Fairlight Hall. Westward are Lord Ashburnham, Mr. Curteis of Windmill Hill (a former Master), Sir. T. Brassey at Normanhurst, and Mr. C. A. Egerton at Mountfield (another previous Master).

The meets may be summarised in the same way. The best recognised ones in the north are Northiam, Broad Oak, Cripp's Corner, and Udimore. To the south are St. Leonard's Green, Bulverhythe, Westfield

just north of Hastings, and one of the best-attended fixtures in the Hunt), Sedlecomb, and The Harrow. Westward are Battle, Normanhurst (Sir T. Brassey's), Gardner Street (Mr. Curteis') Lunsford Cross, and John's Cross. The Bexhill district, Westfield, and Guestling perhaps provide the best meets in the country.

THE ESSEX AND SUFFOLK.*

A FLAT, and mostly deep, country, amid the outpour of many rivers, the Essex and Suffolk occupies the eastern delta of the two counties just north of the Blackwater. The Orwell, the Stour, and the Colne all wind their way through it; and help, more or less, to influence soil and surroundings. Plough from end to end it is, in common with all this corner of England; and where it is stiffest and deepest, there is found the best scent and the best sport. Colchester, Ipswich, and Harwich are the chief places of note in its extent—the first-named being on its western side, the other two on its eastern edge. Colchester is the centre of its lightest and worst district, but has the advantage of commanding many of the meets of the East Essex. Ipswich and Harwich on the other hand have some of the best of the home Hunt close to their gates, but have no where else to look for fox hunting—Harwich being on a point running into the sea, while the ground east of Ipswich owns no pack of fox hounds. We mention these particulars for the possible use of such soldiers as

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 17, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

may receive their "Routes" for one of these three places; while, for the sake of an inquisitive visitor, it may be added that the journey down from London is to be accomplished in about an hour and twenty minutes to Colchester, and two hours to either of the other towns (Liverpool-street Station, Great Eastern Railway). Small fields are the order of the day with the Essex and Suffolk; though there are a good number of county residents within its limits, and the Service is generally to be found represented at all meets within riding distance of the garrisons. All told, however, sixty is more than the average number for a field here.

The river Stour almost exactly bisects the country, and, being the divisional line between the two counties, has Suffolk on its northern bank, Essex on the southern. One day a week is accordingly given to each, and a third day is frequently added where most suitable. The lower part of Suffolk, towards the mouths of the rivers, and the east of Essex are the deepest districts in the Hunt. The coverts of the country are all natural, and, with the exception of a few strong woodlands, are not very large. The country is, in fact, quite an open one; and, though there are plenty of coverts everywhere to hold foxes, they are not of a size or frequency to make the latter dwell long when found. And the supply of foxes is said to be better year by year.

The present Master, Mr. Thomas Nunn, is in his second term of Mastership—having now hunted the country altogether some eight seasons. His uncle

hunted it no less than fifty-two years; after which his father kept it for about ten seasons. The hounds were given to the country by Mr. Nunn when he resigned in 1870, and are kennelled at Stratford St. Mary, seven miles from Colchester. In the better part of the country, the scent is, as a rule, decidedly good; and it is only in the light soil of the west that hounds often have any difficulty in making their way.

As a country to ride over, the Essex and Suffolk is, of course, like its neighbours, very "ploughy." But there are no hills to distress horses or to give hounds the advantage. The fences are quite of the better Essex type—low hedges and broad ditches. Thus your view of hounds is seldom interrupted by ground or growth; and, if you are fairly mounted, you may ride as near the pack as your conscience, or the Master, will let you. The term "fairly mounted" is meant to apply to the requirements of the ground in question—and those requirements are substantial if not very ambitious. Short legs and strong ones, good heart and good wind, with a marked adaptability for a long day and a good supper afterwards, are by no means the least prominent requisites. Sufficient stride and jumping power to enable him to cover a wide ditch at short notice are all essential for a horse here; for the measurement of an Essex ditch is frequently only to be obtained at the last moment. And, though a horse is not every day called upon to overhurry himself, he always has a strong day's work to perform before he gets back to his stable. A weed will soon wear himself to a thread; and a rash

horse is sure to find a ditch to hold him sooner or later.

The country is said to have become much more open of late years—there being nowadays considerably less covert, while the enclosures in many instances have been enlarged and the fences lowered.

The hunting-days of the Essex and Suffolk are Tuesday and Friday—Tuesday being for the Essex side, Friday for the Suffolk, with an occasional bye day. A brief sketch of principal meets and coverts may be made to include the few further necessary details.

Among the Tuesday fixtures, then, is Bentley Hall, which at one time was the first meet of the season. It is the seat of Mr. Woodgate, who has a famous covert in Bentley Hall Wood (a wood of about a hundred acres, in the centre of some of the best of the country). Weeley Street is for Weeley Hall Wood, another very favourite place for foxes, belonging to Mr. E. Weeley. Bradfield Street is an excellent meet, leading to Simpson's Decoy and King's Wood and the good coverts of Stour Wood (on the banks of the Stour) and Copperas. Thorpe Street is fixed to draw Thorpe Park and the Rows—the latter being little more than thick double-hedge-rows, where they often find and run to Bentley. By the way, as an instance of how foxes of the same year will often take exactly the same line, it may be noted that about twenty-five years ago these hounds in one season ran five foxes in succession from Bentley down to Thorpe and killed them all. Had their foxes escaped, the good point would naturally have been laid to the

credit of a single fox. This piece of country—from Stour Wood down to the Landmere—is quite the best of their Essex ground, being wide and open and carrying a capital scent. It rides decidedly deep hereabouts, but as we move towards Colchester riding improves and scent falls off. The Osyth district, in the extreme south-west, however should be noticed first. Hartley Wood is a very favourite covert here. It is now only about a hundred acres; but was at one time of much greater extent. St. Osyth Flag is the meet for the last-named covert and for the other Woods of the district, St. Osyth's Wood, Riddles, and Maldon Wood. Towards Colchester is Elmstead Market for Frating Hall Wood, Mill Grove, and Thorrington Hall Wood (where Mr. W. S. Frost, who is another excellent supporter, invariably has a litter of foxes). Alresford Hall Covert is another good draw. Beyond this Ardleigh Crown is the meet for Langham, Lodge Woods, Bullock Wood, East Wood and High Woods. In the south-west is Berechurch Maypole for the Berechurch and Birch coverts; Golgrove for Golgrove Wood and the Hangings (a good wood well cared for by Mr. Moy). West Burgholt is for Burgholt Wood and Pitsburgh (lately bought by Mr. Errington, who gives it up entirely to the Master in the cause of foxes).

Turning to the Suffolk side we find Hadleigh Crown for Howe Wood (a good covert of Mr. C. Newman's), Groton Wood and Stack Wood—two coverts of nice size—Groton Wood very thick with brambles and undergrowth. Gifford Hall means Mark Wood and Mill Wood, whence they draw on to

Polstead and the Tendring Hall Coverts (Sir C. Rowley's) Boxford Street is for the Osiers, Edwardstone Park and Bull's Cross Woods. Brent-Eleigh, on the edge of the country, points to Preston Grove (neutral with the Suffolk Hunt) and the Camps (belonging to Mr. Brown of Brent-Eleigh Hall—a staunch fox preserver). All the western portion of this Suffolk side is, it may be repeated, quite a light soil upon chalk. Hintlesham Park as a meet has the Hintlesham coverts. Bamford Angel is meant for Sir G. Broke Middleton's coverts, Bulleyne Wood, Bonny and Ditch Wood. Ofton Castle (said to be the best meet in the Hunt) leads to the draws of Middle Wood, Lucy, and Muckhanger. All this is an open sporting country. The Muckhanger foxes are remarkably strong; and often carry hounds into the heart of the Suffolk country. Coddenham, which is also for Sir Broke Middleton's coverts, is about the widest meet in this direction.

About Wattisham, again, the ground is lighter for a while. There would appear to be some confusion hereabouts in Stanford's Map: for the Suffolk Hounds meet at Needham Market—the Essex-and-Suffolk drawing up to Barking.

Wide on the west a strip on the edge of the country has yet to be mentioned. Assington Park Gate is advertised for the coverts of Assington and Wissington, Cornards, and Mr. Mumford's famous wood —light chalk hills on this side. Another meet that must not be omitted is Stratford Hills (where lives Mr. Josselyn, who, though not a hunting man himself, always has a litter of foxes)—whence are drawn The

Commons, Dodnash and the Tattingstone Coverts. It may be added that during the past two seasons the hounds have been much improved by drafts of eleven couple from the Cheshire and eleven and a half from the Milton.

THE YORK AND AINSTY.*

Twisting its tortuous length among half a dozen other well-known Yorkshire Countries, the York and Ainsty has a straggling outline quite unlike that of any other country on the Foxhunting Atlas. It is this very sinuosity and eccentricity of shape that chiefly allows of its being a four-day-a-week country. Its actual acreage would scarcely entitle it to that allowance on its own ground. But, shaped as it is, it has, so to speak, only to arrange its meets, and its neighbours make up all deficiences on the score of space. 'Tis only fair to add that the others fully return the compliment—the procedure being a mere matter of amicable necessity. Thus, the York and Ainsty Country, starting just north of the Badsworth, runs up between the Bramham Moor and the Holderness, is narrowed at York between the Bramham Moor and Lord Middleton's, throws a limb in between the Bramham Moor and the Bedale, and carries its head northward between the Bedale and Lord Middleton's till it reaches the Sinnington. York is its centre—if such a configuration can be said to have a centre.

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* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 5, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

York is the starting-point for the hounds, and the necessary base for any visitor. Many of the meets are so wide that they must be reached by rail; but hack or railway bring all the country within grasp from here. York has its many sporting cities and a regiment of cavalry: and from the two sources supplies a strong proportion of the field at all the nearer meets. With the army York has always been a very popular quarter, both on sporting and social grounds: and fond as soldiers are of a gallop—and indifferent as they often are to the merits of a plough country, especially in their youth—they ever speak reverently and respectfully of the sport they saw and the treatment they met with when quartered at York. For the traveller who would see something of the six Yorkshire packs above enumerated, the capital of the county is easy to reach; and presents every advantage that a hunting-man can desire. The York and Ainsty, Lord Middleton's and the Bramham Moor are easily within riding distance. So is some portion of the Holderness; while the Bedale, Sinnington, and Badsworth can each be reached by rail on their days, without breaking into either breakfast or dinner hour. London to York is a mere trifle of travel nowadays, being but a five hours' journey from London (Great Northern Railway, King's Cross Station). The Kennels are at Acomb, two miles out of York. The Pack belongs to the Hunt: and by dint of careful and clever management has been brought to a high degree of merit, in field and on flag. Capt. Slingsby, of Scriven Park, is now in his third year of Mastership, having succeeded Col. Fairfax, who held office

for six years, and in that time did wonders for the kennel. Previous to the latter, Mr. Lascelles was Master for one year, Sir George Wombwell for three, and Sir Charles Slingsby (whose mournful death still remains vividly in the mind of most hunting-men) for fifteen. Mr. Samuel Bateman, whose nine years of Mastership terminated nearly thirty years ago, and who is now in his seventieth year, is still an active and honoured member of the Hunt.

The Pack was founded some forty years ago; Sir Charles Slingsby filled it with the Grove, Brocklesby, and Lord Portsmouth's blood; and Col. Fairfax, who was one of the first to recognise the merits of the Belvoir Fallible, brought a large infusion of blood from that Kennel through the medium of breeding and drafts. The fact that the Hunt is able to send forty to fifty couple annually out to walk, is not only an immense advantage, but speaks volumes for the good feeling of the farmers.

The York and Ainsty country is a deep clay soil throughout, with scanty exception in the north (about Alne and upwards) and in the extreme west where fox hunting and railway communication find a terminus on hilly moorland. And it is only in this last wide corner that anything approaching a hill is to be found. Scarcely anywhere else till Knaresborough is reached is there even an undulation; while all round York is a dead flat. The whole of it, too, except this trifle of western moorland and a few riverside meadows, is under the plough. The fences are fair hedge-and-ditch, rendered difficult only by the stiff holding clay through which you

have to ride to get at them. They are simple enough when your horse is fresh; but they grow no smaller as a run goes on and his vigour begins to fail. As may be remarked of a dozen other plough countries of similar soil, the York and Ainsty holds the best scent when the ground is thoroughly wet and your horse is going nearly up to his hocks. *Then* it is a good scenting country; and *then* you want a strong and well-bred horse to carry you at all. At other times a working scent and easy going is as much as you can hope for, or expect—for the ground dries, and turns to crust, very quickly under influence of sun or wind. Again, as everywhere else, the running qualities of the foxes vary in proportion to the power of pushing them. On a day when hounds can really press them, they may go pretty straight—even in the Ainsty district, where the coverts are small and very close together. On other and weaker days there are certain parts of the country in which they will scarcely travel beyond the parish in which they were bred.

The only large woodlands of the Hunt are situated in the south and in the extreme north, besides one or two in the Knaresborough district. The first-named comprise Escrick Wood (of several hundred acres), Moreby, and Naburn. Those in the far north are Sessay Wood and Brafferton Spring: while on the Knaresborough side are Ribston, Goldsborough Wood, and Goldsborough Moor. These are all the large coverts of the hunt. The rest are small, and, in many cases, artificial (including some five or six winn coverts). Thus the opportunities of cubhunting are very limited.

In former days the best sport was usually obtained in the country a little to the north of York: when, early and late in the season, travelling foxes would take hounds right up to the hills towards Easingwould and Coxwould. But this line has not been so frequent of late years. By the way, the Olstead corner in the far north should not have been included by Mr. Stanford in the map of the York and Ainsty. During Mr. Bateman's mastership he used to draw it by permission of Sir Tatton Sykes, in the same way that it is now hunted by the Sinnington on sufferance from Lord Middleton—of whose territory it is an integral part. Thirkleby (sixteen or seventeen miles from York) is now about the farthest meet of the York and Ainsty. To reach this and other distant meets north and west (and occasionally also south) the railway has to be made use of for horses, hounds, and men. In fact, there is probably no country in England where the railway is so constantly in requisition—a fact that alone points to much extra expense to be borne by Hunt and individuals.

All the "Liberty" of Ainsty is very enclosed ground: but the country opens out again a good deal as you move towards Tollerton and Easingwould. Galtres Forest no longer exists, though at one time a "royal forest." Indeed, the Royal Hunting Box is still to be seen by the roadside between York and Sutton, though its estate is now only that of a lowly farmhouse. The Ainsty used to be held in vassalage under the Bramham Moor—the terms being that it should be hunted by the York and Ainsty so long as a pack exists under that title.

On the far west the moors begin somewhere about Cayton; and run into the hilly distance far beyond Pateley Bridge, which is virtually the Land's End of the Hunt. Last season they ran several times from the lower ground right on to the moors with strong foxes worthy of the hills. From Scriven Park (the residence of the Master) there is always a chance of a good fox taking them up to the hills, though more often the Copgrove direction is chosen. This was the line on that fatal day in 1868, when four as fine riders and good sportsmen as ever took the field (Sir Chas. Slingsby, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Robinson, and Orvis) were laid side by side in their dripping scarlet, cold and stark, on a table in Newby Hall, and four dead horses were stretched on the bank of the Yore. They had come by Copgrove and the winn of Bishop Monkton—a line already run twice that season—before they struck the river opposite Mr. Clare Vyner's, and called his private ferry-boat into use to follow the pack.

The farmers of the Hunt are just as staunch and sport-loving as ever, though unable, under pressure of the times, to take the field as freely and as well-mounted as in years gone by. There are still a good many forthcoming from the Ainsty and the Easingwold district; and, as times mend, no doubt they will muster as strongly, and ride as good cattle, as in the best of bygone days.

Inferior horses are out of place in Yorkshire. You may get along well enough on a moderate one; but he is not in keeping with the tradition and teaching of the county. What has been already written under the head Bramham Moor will answer verbatim for the

horse required with the York and Ainsty. It is quite a country where men ride—not for sensation jumping, but that they may be near hounds, and may do credit to themselves and their bringing-up. Near York, and especially on a Tuesday, the fields are large—for anywhere out of The Shires. At the northern meets the number may vary between forty at least and sixty at most.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday are the hunting days, divided generally as follows: Monday is held north of York way of Shipton and Skelton. The open country between the latter place and Sessay has not a game preserver—with the single exception of Hon. Payne Dawnay, of Benningborough Hall, who, though he never rides even a pony, looks after the interests of the Hunt throughout the district. His own coverts (Skelton Springs, Overton Wood and Cotehouse) are always full of foxes, Skelton being the usual meet for this neighbourhood. Blue Bridge is a roadside fixture for New Parks and Hawkhills; while Alve (to which the York men often go by rail) may be for Alve Winn and Aldwark Wood, or for the same coverts as Blue Bridge. Near York are the meets of Strensall and Wiggington, from which a run into Lord Middleton's country is a likely contingency, after drawing Strensall Common and Suet Carr (the latter also being a rough open common generally holding good foxes). Stillington is the nearest fixture to Easingwould—the chief covert being Stillington Wood, which leads on to Hawkhills.

Tuesday is always fixed in the Ainsty to suit the Bramham Moor, who in return give Friday on the

same side. Nearest to York is Dringhawses for Askham Bogs—a famous covert, in bog and rough ground overgrown with beech, and a sure find. From here they are likely to go by Askham Winn or to Colton Hagg, or run into the Bramham Moor territory. Streethouses, on the Tadcaster Road, is to draw Coltan Hagg. Red House (the property of Capt. Slingsby, and the old family residence, though at present let) is a very popular meet by the Ouse side. There is a large and capital covert not far from the House, besides some few small spinnies. At Nunappleton are Sir Fred. Milner's good coverts, with Lord Wenlock's Stubb Wood, a capital draw, to follow.

Thursday is for the Knaresborough and Copgrove side. From Ribston are drawn the large woods of Ribston and Goldsborough (Mr. Dent's). At Scriven Park—Capt. Slingsby's—(to which, as with other far-western meets, hounds are more often taken by rail) are various woods and the "Nidd Banks" (good rough covert underbank). Copgrove has its coverts of moderate size and scattered, and was last season the fixture which led to long runs on to the Moors. Allerton Park (the seat of Lord Mowbray) and Kirby Hall (Sir H. Meysey-Thompson)—each have nice coverts. From Ripley Castle hounds probably draw Leonard's Winn and other small places; and the extreme meets in this westerly direction are Swarcliffe Hall and Burnt Gate.

Saturday is almost entirely a woodland day—for the big woods far north or due south. Thus, taking train to Pilmoor or other station handy, they got

to Brafferton to draw the Spring Wood and Sessay Wood, with Pilmoor (a rough moor) close by. Sessay or Raskelf may also be named for the same draws; while, meeting at Thirkleby Park (Sir William Galway's) they are likely to get back to the large woods of Sessay and Brafferton.

The Southern meets on a Saturday are Naburn, Escrick Park (Lord Wenlock's), Moreby Hall (Mr. Preston's), Riccall, and Osgodby—all for the same chain of big woods (aforementioned) and Skipwith Common—a seven hundred acre waste, altogether uncultivated. An occasional meet on the confines of the Country, and close to the border of Lord Middleton's and the Holderness, is Melbourne Hall, where Mr. Christy has some nice coverts—after drawing which hounds must work back in the afternoon to the woodlands.

LORD FITZWILLIAM'S.*

It scarcely amounts to taking away the name of the Country in question to say that only an intense love of hounds, and the necessity to which he has been born of residing here, could possibly have induced Lord Fitzwilliam to have established a pack in such an uncongenial quarter. Sheffield, Rotherham, and their contiguous chain of factories and dwellings, with Parkgate, Swinton, and Mexboro', form an almost unbroken town across the country up to Doncaster—cutting in two the only really huntable portion of a territory that looks wide and extensive on the map. The south is nearly all collieries; and so is a large central strip from south to north. The west is high and broken moorland—whither hounds only get by accident, and where men soon lose themselves amid its gullies, walls, and unknown wilds. Wentworth (the seat of Lord Fitzwilliam) stands the centre of one little oasis, girt on every side by railways, rivers, canals, collieries, tramways, and factories. The only other piece of practicable ground for horse and hound is a strip, two to four miles broad, along the edge of the

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 9, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

Grove, and stretching, practically, from below Rotherham to Doncaster—and, on sufferance, still further along the southern bank of the Don. Lord Fitzwilliam's little country, in fact, is nothing more than a small outlying, and supposedly impossible, tract left unhunted between the Badsworth and the Grove. It was thus that Lord Fitzwilliam found it when he succeeded to the Wentworth Estates about a score of years ago; and here he at once proceeded to establish a pack, by drafts from the family kennels at Milton and from Capt. Percy Williams. So successfully did he make the best of a bad job, that, wherever his hounds are able to get about at all, there are sure to be foxes for them to hunt. Some very queer places do they find themselves in at times: but love of sport is the strongest instinct in every Yorkshireman's soul, and the hounds are everywhere appreciated—sometimes almost to persecution. To the few men residing in Sheffield and Rotherham who have been taught to hunt, the presence of such a pack is a blessing on a par with Nature's bounty in coal and iron—on which they thrive and amid which they follow the hounds. There are staunch and good sportsmen, too, come out of Sheffield—quite apart from the thousands who will travel half a dozen miles by rail, in order to join it on foot and holloa a fox at the most suburban meets—and still more apart from such an instance as went to typify prosperity some years ago, when two colliers bought a horse and hunting kit between them, and in turn worked them three days a week. Fifty or sixty horsemen are to be found at every meet; and tiny—even makeshift—as the country is, three days a week are

enacted with a well turned-out establishment, and a pack fit for the Shires. How the three days are made up is a marvel—scarcely to be explained. One day is home: the other two are border days—or, failing ground or foxes, have to be contrived somehow, and somewhere among the collieries—or the moors. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are the days chosen.

The map should be before you if you would learn how little, and which part, of the country is available for foxhunting. You will see a large area credited to the Earl; but for all practical purposes you may run a pair of scissors up its centre—from Chesterfield by Sheffield up to Barnsley and the Badsworth, following a line of railway all the way. You will thus cut off the western moors and many of the chief nests of coalpits. The southernmost loop, too, between Chesterfield and Sheffield, can do little in the interest of foxhunting—collieries usurping the greater part of its extent, and leaving only room for a single meet, namely, Gleedless Tollbar, from whence they draw Mr. Bagshaw's woods at "The Oaks," where they generally find a wild moorland fox, but failing which they draw Hanging Lea, a large gorse covert about 18 acres, recently planted by Lord Fitzwilliam. Quite outside this district and on the edge of the moors is a meet at Norton, with two or three good woods of Mr. Cammell in the neighbourhood. Such an advertisement is invariably a signal for a popular holiday from Sheffield; and thousands who ought to be at work are footing it with hounds that day. The other loop (for the whole district is a patchwork of pieces enclosed by subdividing railways), having

Wentworth as its centre, is, again, completely separated from the remaining useful strip along the east, by the narrow valley of the Don—having two lines of railways, a river, and an unbroken street or two, all along its border on that side. Indeed, a fox found near Wentworth, can only run a narrow circle, or dodge about from covert to covert till he is killed —for a double line of railway, a river, and a canal block him again round the north, and coal and iron-works entirely cut off his escape to the west. It is different with the eastern strip; for a fox can travel thence as far as he pleases into the Grove country. There are plenty of coverts to lead him thither, while, as already mentioned, the valley of the Don at his back altogether prevents him turning his head in the other direction. A little patch of grass, good enough for Leicestershire even, exists on the eastern border. A three-mile circle would perhaps contain it; but, as far as it goes, it offers a charming soupçon amid ruder fare. With this exception, all the open ground in Lord Fitzwilliam's country is ploughed — where cultivated at all. As a whole, it puts forward little pretensions to being an agricultural country. It has other, and more wealthy aspirations. Where cultivation comes in at all, it is generally done as if it were merely a temporary operation. The stiff clay is turned and tended to grow whatever it will; but the fences are more often built in the most heterogeneous and haphazard fashion—especially as we near the coalpits. Thorns, sticks—even wire and old chains—are thrust together to make some sort of barrier. Ditches are never dug; and an honest post-and-rail is rare. In

the most "truly rural" districts there are simple swish hedges, easy to get over or through — with neither bank nor ditch to render them terrible.

The Wentworth country is all strong and deep clay, The East is a lighter soil; and a trip into Grove territory probably puts you on a surface approaching to red sand till you reach the fen land beyond the borrowed ground below Doncaster. And the whole is flat, until the moorlands are touched on the west and south.

With a country so difficult and confined, Lord Fitzwilliam yet keeps about fifty couple of hounds in kennel, and, as already written, brings them out three days a week. Wentworth and the home-coverts supply one day; and the eastern border has to bear the brunt of the other two, aided by occasional trips among the collieries and on to the moorlands. There are plenty of nice coverts round Wentworth, and, needless to add, plenty of foxes; close by, too, is another part of the family property, viz., Hesley Park and Tankersley Old Hall—the latter having been, a hundred years ago, a very large Park, but now altogether cut up. From here they may occasionally run over the railway, beyond Westwood Station and in among the collieries; but this is neither very likely nor desirable.

Turning to the east of the country, we find Ulley Gorse, just south of Rotherham, and close to Treeton Wood, offering as good a chance of a run as anything in the Hunt. It belongs to Mr. F. Foljambe, and is, naturally, a safe find. Wickersley Gorse is another nice covert, and for this the meet is Wickersley Toll

Bar. Ravenfield and Hooton-Roberts (which Lord Fitzwilliam retains in his own hands) have each a good gorse: and at Denaby (a name that is best known in connection with the great colliery, employing some 3000 miners) is a large oak-scrub wood, where several litters of foxes are always bred. Crook Hill House is another meet hereabouts: with Clifton (also remaining in Lord Fitzwilliam's hands) close by. Half way between Clifton and Wickersley lies Micklebring Gorse, which is held to be the crack covert of the Hunt—lying, as it does, in the middle of a beautiful little grass valley. Half a mile beyond Micklebring is Mr. Wood's Gorse; and the same good sportsman who owns it also takes good care of Silverwood, the meet of both for which may be Ravenfield or Hooton-Roberts. Foxes from any of this cluster of coverts will most likely take their flight across the border for Lord Scarboro's place, Sandbeck Park. A couple of miles south of Doncaster is Edlington Wood—a capital covert of some 600 or 700 acres, the property partly of Lord Fitzwilliam and partly of Mr. Foljambe, a joint ownership that speaks for itself as far as foxes are concerned. The meet for the last-named covert is sometimes Edlington Village, sometimes Warmsworth. Its rides are wide and well turfed; and the favour it finds with foxes not unnaturally extends to the field. A single day might suffice to run through the little string of coverts just enumerated. But, as each is likely to show a litter or two every year, and there is plenty of space outside and over the border, they stand a great deal of work before the supply runs short. St. Catherine's Well

lies just on the edge of the recognised country; and here a fox is often to be found among the lowlying "carrs" (fenland), with the choice before him of turning back to Edlington or of going for Rossington —in the latter case having a clear course before him, with the exception of one small canal to swim.

Beyond Doncaster Lord Fitzwilliam sometimes goes by permission into the extreme north of the Grove dominion—for instance, to Cantley and Armthorpe (Lord Auckland's) and Barney Dun. There are few, if any, strong coverts in this direction—but much rough ground which may tempt a fox. When found, he is nearly sure to leave sand and shingles behind and make his way as quick as he can to Hatfield Chase, a low heather-covered moor which can neither be drained, cultivated, nor ridden over, and where chances are strongly in favour of the pack being lost possibly for the night.

THE CRAWLEY AND HORSHAM.*

Down, weald, and forest are the three varieties of ground which compose the present Crawley and Horsham country. In running down to the sea, side by side with the Southdown (and between it and Lord Leconfield's), it cuts into both the range of down on the coast and the lower weald inland, which stretch across all three Hunts. North of the weald again is an undulating and strongly-wooded district, still denominated "the Forest;" and thus the country is made up of three very distinct sections.

The geographical outline of the Hunt has been so materially altered since the maps referred to in the footnote were compiled, that they give little or no idea of its present outline. The C. & H. (an abbreviation we must be allowed throughout this sketch) now goes right down to Arundel, Worthing, and the sea —by virtue of a gift of ground from Lord Leconfield. On the other hand, the Hunt has thrown aside all the western and cruder half of its old territory as coloured on the maps, and has assumed an equally compact

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map,' Sheet 22, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

shape, with the advantage of now having its kennels almost exactly in the middle of the country.

The C. & H. is a country decidedly in favour with the Londoners: for, while it is well outside the realms of Cockneydom and shares none of the disadvantages under which so many suburban packs suffer, it is yet easy of access and is able to offer a great deal of genuine sport. It is a fair—if not a rapid—scenting country: is well off for foxes (at least in all its best districts); and owns a capital working pack. Since Col. Calvert took over the hounds—a dozen years ago—he has maintained the numbers (some fifty couple) almost entirely by means of Mr. Lane Fox's annual young draft from Bramham, with the result that the driving qualities and cleanness of shape for which that pack is now so famous are observable with the C. & H. Kennels and hounds are the property of the Hunt: and the Kennels, with proportionate stabling, are extremely neatly built, and well situated close to the station of West Grinstead. The 8 a.m. train from Victoria will land you at Horsham before ten o'clock, and in time for most meets; or you may use the train for points further south, such as Steyning or Arundel. It is on days when hounds are most accessible from the metropolis that the C. & H. fields are at their largest. Not that they are ever really big—one hundred being, perhaps, their outside complement. In countries such as Sussex visitors from a distance are never likely to assemble in sufficient numbers as to interfere with sport—or even to make it such a matter of difficulty as sometimes in the Shires. Moreover—whatever may be the case here—

there are few subscription-packs to which the visitors do not readily contribute their full share; and their presence, therefore, is more often a boon than a drawback. Besides, the fences of Sussex are seldom of a kind to suffer much injury under the passage of a field of horsemen. They are more often a ragged growth on a bank; and are scarcely disturbed by a horse jumping on and off them, or picking his way over, one foot after another. Where all the country is under the plough, there is little need for strong fencing; but wherever it is found necessary to strengthen the hedges, it is usually done by means of strong wattle. A flighty horse is out of place anywhere in Sussex. With the C. & H. if it is not always needful to look before you leap, it is certainly necessary to look while you are doing so: and there is no country where a horse learns more fully to take care of himself. If at all rash, he is sure to tumble about; and as self-preservaton is the first instinct of the noble animal, the chances are he soon steadies down and earns himself a character for cleverness. Besides being clever he must be stout; for most of the C. & H. country (except the Downs) is a stiff deep clay, and the rides in the Forest are holding and tiring.

Roughly speaking, the Forest is situated to the north-east of the kennels (or chiefly to the east of Horsham), and is a tract of large disconnected woods, with a certain amount of open country in between them. Many of these woods have of late years been let to Londoners for shooting purposes: and so it often happens that master and keeper are alike

strangers to the country, and indifferent to any other interests but their own. The rides are very deep in places, but the woods are not, as a rule, difficult to get about. On a good scenting day, and with hounds close at him, a fox is very glad to leave the choking brushwood and run the rides—the prettiest phase of woodland hunting.

The weald, or vale, again, has coverts of a very manageable size, thickly grown, and with foxes plentiful. There is seldom a *burning* scent, but often a good one—especially when the ground is not too wet and cold (a postulate that would seem to apply to many stiff clay countries—the *vice versâ* to those on lighter soil). The foxes, too, are stout and tough, and seldom give up their lives easily. Those of the Forest are especially strong, and are remarkable for their dark colour—their brushes being often almost absolutely black.

The C. and H. now limits its operations on the Forest side to the line of the London and Brighton railway (which bisected the original country from Three Bridges to Keymer). Its weald, and afterwards the Down, now reaches from the Kennels along the railway from Horsham to Arundel and Littlehampton—the weald reaching about to Amberley and Steyning, the Down and "over-the-hill" to the sea. The Down is much like that of the Southdown.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday are the four days of hunting, and Col. Calvert often adds a bye day to these. Taking the Kennels as a centre Monday and Thursday are for the north and north-east (chiefly forest and woodland); while Tuesday

and Saturday are for the open ground south and south-west.

Among the usual Monday meets are the following, all of which lead to large woods often almost touching each other (though a fox may sometimes be forced into the open country outside), viz., Holme Bush (Mr. Clifton Brown's), where a good fox is often to be started, Tilgate Lodge, Pound Hill, Fay Gate, Rusper, Sun Oak, Leonard Lee (where Mr. Egerton Hubbard, Secretary to the Hunt, resides—and always has sterling foxes), Nuthurst, Peas Cottage, The High Beeches. About Warnham and Rusper it is very hilly; and the "gills," or gullies, make it extremely difficult to be always with hounds. Some gorse coverts have lately been planted on these slopes.

Thursday, again, is usually spent rather farther south, and takes in the Bolney and Cuckfield district, undulating ground more akin to the weald, though the coverts are still very large. From Bolney they draw the woods of Pickwell: Colwood Park is for the well known, and favourite, Spronkett Woods (Mr. Smith's): Cowfold, or The Kennels, means the nice coverts of Moon Wood and Gervoise's Woods—all this part of the country, adjoining the Southdown, being by no means the worst of the Hunt. Nuthurst, which stands on a hill, has some large and tempting looking coverts: Southwater is for the Trellar's Woods, where strong wild foxes are always found: and Muntham is the property of a good old sportsman, Mr. Percy Godman, who invariably provides foxes of a similar stamp. Slinford is for Col. St. John's nice

woods, and the Five Oaks. And, though much to the north of the rest of the usual Thursday ground, the Master's place at Ockley is generally named on that day. There is some very useful open country about here, and, after drawing his own coverts, he is likely to name Hitchcock's and the Roman Woods for the afternoon.

Tuesday is taken for the south of the country—either on the downs, or just "under" or "over the hill." Parham Park, where Mr Newton lives and has some nice coverts, comes under the denomination of under the hill—being close under the northern slopes. Applesham is a hill-meet, and leads to the gorses and similar down-country as already described under the head of The Southdown. Among the more notable of the gorse-coverts are Steepdown, Lancing Ring, and Stunkbottom—the latter being a gorse of considerable size. Steyning is another meet for the same district. Patching Pond is "over the hill" in what is more often known as "the Findon country" for a set of coverts, large woods, chiefly owned by Sir Henry Fletcher and the Duke of Norfolk. And Findon itself is advertised with the same view, having also the Clapham woods, from which a fox is likely enough to cross right over the downs to the coverts beyond. Worthing does much to swell the field when hounds are anywhere in this quarter.

Saturday is purely in the weald, or vale; where the coverts are comparatively small, the country open, foxes stout, the fences built stronger, and the soil a stiff clay. A south-west wind and not too much moisture—is the prayer of sportsmen here. Among

the fixtures are—Dial Post, a very good meet for French Land Woods (Mr. John Goring's, who, though never riding, is a thorough friend to the Hunt): Horsebridge Common, with coverts round it, and a stout fox always at Cork Wood and Calcott Wood: Broomer's Corner, for Mr. Carew-Gibson's coverts: Coolham Green for Hose Wood: Ashington for Hookland Plantation, The Baldwins, or American Woods (capital draws, also belong to Mr. Goring): Wappingthorn Gate, generally for Sir C. Goring's coverts: and Jolesfield Common—a large open common, whence many a good run has started—with Hatrell Woods and Lock Woods, and again every chance of a run, to follow.

THE WEST KENT.*

A CONSIDERABLE similarity of country runs through the whole of Kent. Its distinguishing features may be more strongly developed in one locality than another; but in the main its leading points are the same throughout. More hill or less hill, more big woods or fewer, more wold or fewer valleys—it is only a question of degree. The East Kent and the Tickham have already been dealt with; and a sketch of the West Kent, to stand by itself, would necessarily contain a *réchauffé* of much that has been written about the other two. As a matter of comparison, the West Kent has, perhaps, more open country, less rough and flinty highland, more pronounced vale than, and not quite such immense woods as, the Tickham, which intervenes between, and graduates down to, the East Kent. But its hills are just the same chalk slopes, with flint-covered surface and unfenced tillage; its frequent woods are of the same hazel, beech and unthorned undergrowth, with narrow straggling rides. Hop gardens fill its rich and sheltered nooks; fruit is freely grown where the soil favours orchard or garden;

* Vide Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 22 and 23, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

and until lately grass was only to be seen along the base of its valleys. Now, however, a good deal has been laid down on the hills. A strong or constant scent is not its characteristic; and the number and propinquity of its coverts add greatly to the difficulty of handling foxes. In the cubhunting months, and in the early season, while the underwood retains its foliage, the number of masks brought back to kennel is very small, and the score for the year depends chiefly on honest success after Christmas. On the hills especially is it hard and trying work for hounds and huntsman; and only science and perseverance can ever lead to triumph.

The West Kent Country is situated as follows. It begins at the Thames on the north—going as near London as civilisation and bricks-and-mortar will allow, and following its course by Greenhithe, Gravesend, to the mouth of the river, to take in the promontory known as the Hundred of Hoo. Rochester and Maidstone are on its eastern boundary line, Sevenoaks on its western; while Tunbridge and Tunbridge Wells are within its confines on the south, and it can stretch as far beyond them as it chooses. The towns mentioned all respectively furnish their quota when hounds are near them; and a few Londoners come down occasionally. But, though a little more than an hour's journey from Victoria or Ludgate Hill will set horse and man down at any required station within the Hunt, the West Kent is not a country that attracts many visitors from the big city. The time-honoured grounds of the Old Surrey and Surrey Union still meet

with much more favour in the eyes of metropolitan foxhunters, who of necessity or inclination are prevented from going farther afield; and the West Kent field is chiefly local. Further, it is in a very great measure composed of farmers, who, as a body in the Hunt in question, are thoroughly fond of the fox and the fun he brings; and even on the Tunbridge side the numbers of all ranks seldom exceed fifty or sixty people.

The Hon. Ralph Nevill (Birling Manor, Maidstone) has been for nineteen years Master of the West Kent. For the first two years he shared the office with the late Mr. Wingfield Stratford; and for eight years previously he had kept a small private pack, hunting a part of the western woodlands of the Tickham, and a part of the West Kent Country near his own Kennels. The present West Kent pack is his property; and is kept up to its strength chiefly by means of the young drafts of the Quorn and other good packs. The same difficulty as to rearing and entering homebred puppies exists here as with two or three other packs in the south of England; and though walks can be found for thirty-five to forty couple of puppies every year, it has been necessary, through bad luck with distemper, to have recourse to drafts from other Kennels. But, fortunately, so many Hunts are nowadays able to find quarters for a number far beyond their own actual requirements, that young hounds of high class and breeding are always to be secured. In a "first draft," too, from a good Kennel, there are sure to be several undeveloped youngsters that, like the ugly duckling, eventually

attain to a much higher standard of looks—while for work they may be no whit behind their more fancied brothers and sisters. A foxhound must be at least a fairly-shaped one for the county of Kent. He is of little use if his back and loins are not muscular enough to push him up hill with ease. If there is any lumber about his shoulders he can never come down the steep slopes at top speed; while if his feet are not compact and strong the flints will soon send him back to Kennel a cripple. Even a good-footed hound often finds it difficult to move at best pace over the roughest of the hills; and a whole pack will sometimes be held back from driving to the front with a good head—however strong the scent may be.

The requirements hold good for horse as for hound. Your horse for the West Kent need not be a very expensive mount; but he must be able to go up hill and down, and, further, if he has to take his turn wherever hounds may be advertised, he must be capable enough to jump some fair strong fences in the vales of Tunbridge and Ightham. A good deal of meadow and pasture is there met with; and the intervening fences, where wanting in natural strength, are built up with stout wattle, and well-ditched besides. On the hills you may often go all day without jumping at all; as a land-mark between neighbour and neighbour is held to be sufficient guard over the corn fields for all practical purposes. During recent depression much hill land has been thrown altogether out of cultivation, or at best allowed to drift into rough sheep-walk; and is now rapidly assimilating itself to down. An improved

scent and better going serve, though sadly, to illustrate the saying as to an ill wind and the good it blows.

The Kennels have until lately been at Wrotham Heath; but the present site is at Warren House, near Otford—in many respects a more suitable place, though at some distance from the Master, being no less than twelve miles from Birling Manor.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday have been the hunting days, but this season hounds are out five days a week and sometimes six, the Master's nephew, Lord George Nevill, hunting them when they go into the Eridge country, which is generally on a Wednesday. The meets are fixed as the requirements of the country demand—no particular rule being observed, beyond that two days are generally given to the hills and two to the vales, and that Monday is nearly always spent in the Penshurst-and-Tunbridge Vale, while on every third Saturday hounds are taken down to the Hundred of Hoo. This latter is a low-lying peninsula forming almost a little country of itself, between the Thames and the Medway and some fifteen miles in extent. There are few coverts in it; and foxes are generally found in the reed beds near the shore. A fox must swim to reach his kennel on some dry patch, hounds must swim to draw for him, and more than one member of the pack has in past years been lost in the effort. But there is a good covert here of Lord Darnley's, called Chattenden Roughs, always full of foxes. And there is a nice thick gorse at Norhead, which place is one of the two usual meets for the Hundred country—the other

being Four Elms Hill. The hounds have to be sent on overnight; and have generally taken advantage of the hospitality of Mr. Hilton (Master of the Hoo Harriers) or Mr. Hulkes of Higham.

There is some pleasant undulating ground along the north of the country at the back of Gravesend; but you soon get on to the hills—while, again, all the north-west gradually merges into fruit gardens, altogether at variance with crosscountry foxhunting. Cobham Hall (Lord Darnley's) is a meet, though hounds seldom go there nowadays; and a fox has been known to run from there through the outskirts of Gravesend, to be killed on the Thames bank at Northfleet. Swanscombe Bottom (with some considerable coverts near) is, perhaps, the northernmost meet hereabouts; and Swanley Junction the widest on the north-west. On the East Hills foxes are stout and wild—not easy to kill, nor easy to keep above ground. One of their best friends is Sir William Hart-Dyke, of Lullingstone Castle, whose coverts are ever a sure find—as are those of Mr. Warings of Chelsfield (whose love for the good red rover is quite a hobby). Mr. John Russell's coverts at Horton, also, are notable as being never drawn blank. Farningham, Hartley, and Portobello are other frequent meets for these Hills.

To the south of them is a narrow vale running by Ightham to Sevenoaks; and near the latter are some large woodlands belonging to Lord Amhurst, another good supporter of the Hunt. Otford Gate, Ightham, Crown Point, Wrotham, Addington-Park and Birling Manor are all meets along the line of railway from Sevenoaks to Maidstone; and just across the valley

by which it runs, are the enormous Mereworth Woods, the property partly of Lord Falmouth and partly of Sir Francis Geary.

Over the hill, again, is the best of the country—viz., the stiff, heavy vale by Tunbridge, Penshurst, and Edenbridge. Double ditches, by the way, are not at all unfrequent obstacles here, and the stranger should be prepared accordingly. Lord Hardinge at South Park, Mr. Mead-Waldo, and Col. Streatfield, with the two Messrs. Field, are leaders among those who keep this part of the country supplied with foxes. Bow Beach, Penshurst, and South Park will frequently occur as meets with this ground in view.

As we get on to Tunbridge Wells and beyond, the country becomes again more undulating and hilly. Eridge Castle is one of the meets for the Eridge district. In conclusion, Mr. S. Umfreville of Ingress Abbey has hitherto acted as a deputy-master, to assist Mr. Nevill; and is now succeeded in that capacity by Lord George Nevill and Mr. L. Bligh, nephews of the masters.

SIR WATKIN WYNN'S.*

A VERY sporting and enjoyable country is that hunted by Sir Watkin from his beautiful seat at Wynnstay, Ruabon. From Chester in the north almost to Shrewsbury in the south, from Whitchurch in the east across to the Welsh Hills, comprises a territory in which Denbighshire, Cheshire, and Shropshire are all represented. And, though backed along its whole length by the rugged mountains of Wales, the bulk of its extent is a level plain, eminently suitable for foxhunting operations of the pleasantest kind. A light, and fairly easy, riding country, carrying a good scent, having a fine supply of foxes and a splendid pack to drive them—no wonder Sir Watkin's is a popular Hunt, or that men troop in over the borders whenever opportunity offers.

In describing the country the mountains may be left out of calculation altogether. Hounds never go there, unless carried up by some highland wanderer; and then they get on to wondrous rough ground, amid bogs and boulders, heather and moss, where they can run hard, but where no horseman can follow them—

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 8, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

unless he has happened to have been born on the mountain-side, and knows every sheepwalk and hillpath. It is said that one of Charles Payne's (the veteran huntsman) earliest experiences, in this direction when he first came to Denbighshire, was to find himself beyond the pale of English-speaking humanity. For a time his hounds were lost, so was his way and so was all power of inquiry (for as yet his tongue was guileless of Welsh liquid and double consonant). At length by a happy chance he hit upon a shepherd who had seen the world, and who could speak something of the barbarous language of the lowlands. Delighted at the lucky meeting, the lost huntsman eagerly inquired his whereabouts—only to learn that here was "The Land's End," the last English-named place in the mountains, and that all beyond was a black void of Welsh Highland, in which he might as well inquire after his hounds as search for them in the dark abyss of Styx.

But it is the plain below—the valley of the Dee, and the level sweep beyond—that constitute the pleasant hunting grounds of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, and for which be formed his pack some eight-and-thirty years ago. Some of it is under the plough; but a great deal is beautiful grass—and where the plough has been at work the soil is light and firm rather than heavy and deep. In fact, the Cheshire vale (up the Dee-side to Chester) is exactly of the same character as the Cheshire Country over the border, while the Shrewsbury (or Beschurch) and Whitchurch ground are altogether of Shropshire type—gently undulating grass and plough inter-

mingled. Small enclosures (and so, of course, frequent fences) reign throughout. As with The Cheshire, you almost live in the air when hounds are running. There is nothing much to stop you, while, on the other hand, every inducement is held out to jump. There are few bridle roads, or lines of gates; though there are frequent lanes. But, when once in a lane, it is often difficult to see over the bank on either side, nor is it always easy to get out of it again. The fences, however, though varying in strength in proportion to the use required of them—for instance, whether on a grazing farm or among cornfields—are generally very practicable, even tempting. A top-binder is a thing unknown. Every hedge is trimmed on its own merits, without resort to the artifice of laying and building that creates such ramparts across the smooth pasturage of the Shires. Thus (except, perhaps, in the case of a stile in a corner) a horse is never turned over by the knees; the sudden puzzled "Where am I? What's happened? Where's my hat? Get your foot out of it, you brute! Not a bit, thanks, don't wait for me!" represent a sensation almost unknown in the counties of Chester and Salop; and, moral, a man ought to be able to go on riding there for ever. The worst that ever happens to him is to find himself bowled over, or into a ditch—though even this depends a good deal upon circumstances and constitution for its charm, a charm that is altogether wanting in the accident of the ditch being just big enough for you both, and you the undermost. Most of the fences are thorn growth upon a low bank, whereon there may, or may not, be room for hind legs

in passing—a point that a horse should soon learn to discover for himself, the more so that great pace is not essential, even if it be on occasion permissible in covering them. Given the ditch towards him, if he cannot bring you safely into the next field he has no business in a jumping country; for, if he springs at all, there is nothing to throw him back or turn him over. With the ditch beyond, and the hedge fairly trimmed, it is a thousand to one on safe landing. And in the whole country there are not a dozen instances of the trap—a ditch on both sides. The only difficulties that ever interfere with riding to hounds are the dingles, occurring chiefly in the home district, and caused, no doubt, by the watershed from the hilltops. These are rough and wooded gullies, forking it in all directions; and, while you are threading one arm, hounds may be doubling back up another, of which their fox has only too gladly availed himself. The greater part of the country, indeed, is good plain sailing—allowing you to take it at your leisure when the scent is cold, or to fly it when the pack settles to run. Should the latter be the order over the Cheshire Vale, you will need a horse that can hold his own anywhere; for you will be riding to a flying pack in good company; and he, and you, must be quick to turn, ready to resolve, and in every sense fit to go. As a rule, a very active, short-legged horse is the one for the country.

Ruabon, near which the kennels lie, is some five hours from London (Paddington or Euston Square)—too far for the excursionist fox hunter, but by no means a bad place for a man who would hunt four

days a week with one pack. If variety is to be sought, Chester or Shrewsbury offers a better base, and Whitchurch better than either—the last named commanding almost all Sir Watkin Wynn's, the cream of the South Cheshire, and many meets of the North Staffordshire and North Shropshire.

Sir Watkin started his pack some forty years ago, by purchasing the hounds of Mr. Leche (who had been hunting the country) and those of Mr. Grout of Kilgraston, the Master of the Perthshire. In its earliest days the Kennel held several strains of good blood, *e.g.*, from the old Cheshire Kennel, the Duke of Buccleugh's, Lord Yarboro's, Fife, Pytchley, and Duke of Rutland's. Two years later (1845) Sir Watkin bought five couple at Mr. Foljambe's sale; and about twenty years ago his Kennel owned two hounds that have since made it famous—Painter (who goes back to the Belvoir Druid, and his dam to the Cheshire Bruiser), and Regent by the Fitzwilliam Regent. At the present time it would be difficult indeed to name a pack whose build is cleaner and whose legs and feet are a better model.

The present series of sketches is not intended to include notice of the existing huntsmen of Countries described: but, in connection with Sir Watkin's, it cannot be left unwritten that Charles Payne of Pytchley renown is in this year 1881 about to enter upon his fiftieth season of service with hounds,—to all appearance as fresh and vigorous as when all the world used to talk, and Mr. Whyte Melville used to write, of his brilliant achievements from Crick and

Misterton. Beginning in a minor capacity with the Quorn, in the days of Sir Harry Goodrick, and the kennels at Thrussington, he went at the end of five years to whip in to the Oakley and George Beers. Ten years later he came to the Pytchley; and, after nineteen years unexampled success with them, took service under Sir Watkin, and is now in his sixteenth year at Wynnstay, with all his old keenness and happiness in the sport as strongly marked as ever.

The coverts of the Hunt are nearly all small places —chiefly of natural growth. Beyond the Duke's Woods and their immediate neighbours there is scarcely a covert large enough to be of use in cub hunting, though all the country is well stocked with foxes.

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday are the four usual hunting days; and in noting how they are distributed we can point out any peculiarities marking the different sides of the country.

Monday and Friday generally alternate with each other in being assigned to the home district or to the Shropshire—more often termed the Baschurch—side. The home district includes the roughest ground in the Hunt and the only strong woods. The latter are Brynypys, Duke's Woods (Lord Brownlow's), Penley Dingles (the property of the widow of a very fine sportsman, the late Rev. E. H. Dymock), and The Wyches, part of which belong to Mr. T. Drake, part to Mr. Godsal. They are all situated in a line, and are thoroughly cared for from end to end. Brynypys (Mr. Edmund Peel's, an excellent preserver) is the most common meet for these coverts. The Trotting

Mare has a rough country round it, but stout straight foxes. Duke's Woods, by the way, are mainly long straggling covert and dingle, affording ample shelter for foxes, but such shelter as they cannot cling to long when pressed by hounds. Marchwill and Sutton Green are two other good places. Greddington is also in the home circle, and has some long plantations to draw. The only fixture on the Welsh side of the Welshpool and Chester Railway, now in vogue, is Brogyntyn (Lord Harlech's) just under the mountains. Till lately there was a strong covert at Pentrebychan (now grubbed up), from which foxes nearly always ran up the hills. The Shropshire or Baschurch side is nice ground, especially in a wet season—a good deal of plough about it, but a light soil, fences not difficult, and the coverts small woods and plantations. Near Oswestry, however (Oswestry to the Severn being held to constitute the Shropshire side), is a nice gorse known as Aston Gorse, belonging to Colonel Lloyd, who at one time was a hard rider in the Midlands. A new gorse was also planted two years ago at Little Ness by Mr. Darby. Baschurch Rednal, Woodhouse, Whittington Petton and Oteley are all well-known meets in this district.

Wednesday is more frequently for the Cheshire side, which is quite the best of the country. From Broughton to Eaton Hall is known as the Chester Vale; nearly all is beautiful turf; scent scarcely ever fails; and foxes are fully plentiful. The River Dee occasionally makes a difficulty; for, if a fox cross it and no bridge be handy, it is impossible for horsemen to follow; for the stream is wide and deep, and the

banks high and overhanging. The present Duke of Westminster nearly lost his life when, as Lord Grosvenor, he attempted, years ago, to swim it. Among the best meets for this districts are Broughton (where resides Mr. Howard, who has sons hunting though he no longer often joins the chase himself—and whose gorse has been the source of many a recent good run); Worthenbury (where is another good friend to the sport, the Rev. Theophilus Pulleston); Chorlton; Carden Park, with favourite little coverts of gorse and blackthorn; Macefen, with a good gorse (well preserved by the Hon. E. Kenyon, and whence there is almost invariably a run); Farndon; and, just beyond, Aldersey (the seat of Squire Aldersey), with the Aldersey Brook close, a continual source of merriment and misfortune. For the Broxton Hills, on the outside of the country, and joining the Cheshire Hills, the meet is Edge Green; and the Cheshire Hills are drawn neutrally with The Cheshire as far as what is known as The Gap.

Saturday is understood to be, as a rule, for the Whitchurch side—the east of the country—where the ground is more undulating, grass chiefly grown, and the sport generally good. Iscoed Park (the seat of Mr. Godsal, who is connected by marriage with the family of Sir Watkin) is a capital meet, with good coverts at hand and good foxes ensured. At Hinton is Mr. Ethelston-Peel, who, like his brother, is a thorough fox preserver. There are coverts round the House, besides Peel's Gorse—a certain find. Whitchurch is often fixed—sometimes with a view to Peel's Gorse, or, it may be, for Brown's Moss (a lake

with gorse round its edges). Ash is a very popular meet, with excellent country all round, and Ash Wood and some new coverts right well looked after by Major Bulkeley who lives close by. New-Street-Lane Lodge is for Styche or Shavington, in the corner beyond Whitchurch. Styche itself is often advertised, for Styche Wood and Shavington Park (Lord Kilmorey's). Sandford is the residence of Mr. Sandford, a model for preservers. The reed beds, osiers, plantations, &c., never fail to be thickly tenanted. The meets of Ightfield and Cloverly may point either to Sandford or Cloverly.

Wednesday in the Cheshire Vale generally brings out the largest fields, made up from The Cheshire, Liverpool, Manchester, &c. But the Whitchurch side, too, often has a very full attendance.

THE HURSLEY.*

A ROUGH little country of wood and wold, but well preserved and well hunted, and where sport is worked out in spite of difficulties, is the Hursley, under the management of Col. Nicoll. Some thirty couple of hounds (chiefly of Lord Portsmouth's blood) are kennelled at Pitt Farm, close to Winchester; to hunt the down that stretches to Stockbridge, and the woodland that runs down to Southampton and adjoin the New Forest. The Kennels may be somewhat primitive; but they are eminently healthy and comfortable —being well thatched buildings, warm in winter, cool in summer, and with the bracing air of the downs ever playing on the hillside where the hounds are exercised.

The north of the Hursley country is akin to that of its neighbours, the Tedworth and the H.H.—mile upon mile of sweeping undulations—the thin soil that covers the chalk tilled everywhere for grain or green crop; sharp flints scattered broadcast over the surface; and never a fence to check horse or hound in his stride. Here and there the outline of the cornfields is

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 21, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

just marked out with what may once have been a hedge, but now is merely a thin broken line of thorn bushes: and a dogcart might be driven over the face of the country for miles, without an upset or even a damaged spring. On a real scenting day over such ground, a fox positively cannot live before hounds if they start on good terms with him. For there is none of the scrambling, tailing, and difficulty that must accrue to the best of packs when forcing its way through and over a stiffly enclosed country. Where fences are strongly built—too high to fly, and too thick to let hounds more than dribble through—not only the fox, but the field, have six to four the best of the game, especially if the enclosures are small and the fences, consequently, close together. In such a case, Reynard slips through his chosen smeuse without check or hindrance, and gains many a length at each; while the more keen and eager the hounds, the more they tumble over and check one another—and the more chance they give a jumping field to cut off and interfere with them. Again, a beaten fox or a bad one, will assuredly dodge up a hedgerow—and does it, moreover, with the advantage that the pack behind him is having a tiring scrimmage of its own at every fence, that the quickest hound to extricate himself is blowing the others, and that the whole energies of the remainder are concentrated in the effort to squeeze past each other and overtake the leader. On the downs, on the contrary, Reynard gets no respite from the moment he starts. He is half killed before he thinks of turning, and then he has nowhere to turn. The worst thing that can

happen to him in any country is to be "bustled off his legs" in the first twenty minutes. Here he has no chance of dodging to recover his wind and distance. There is nothing to cover, prompt, or assist, his flank march. He can be seen for miles on the open hillside; and merely plays into the hands of his enemies by turning short. Meanwhile a racing pack has been stretching along in his wake—every hound going up to the front, and every hound in better training than the object of pursuit. Thus a quick pack need never ask for more than five-and-thirty minutes to twist up an old fox over the downs—be the downs Hursley, Hambledon, Tedworth, or Craven—given the two named conditions of a good start and a proper scent. True, all the needful conditions don't come every day. If they did, we should all turn out to overrun Hampshire—especially in the case of hot-headed old age, failing nerve, or a better term, matured judgment. We should buy a galloper, and fling field after field behind us as gaily as when in early life we sought distinction from Melton Spinney or Waterloo Gorse—and found it at the first unexpected oxer.

It is in wet weather that hounds can do most justice to themselves over the open down—or, more properly, wold—of the "top country," by which name that part of the Hursley above Winchester is generally known. The ground must be thoroughly damp to hold a scent to which they can race. To be ready for such occasions, hounds, and horses too, should be not only speedy, but fit. And, besides being built to skim over the ground, each must have feet calculated to withstand the flints, which crop up to the surface so

lavishly that they are often raked into heaps to clear the ground for agriculture.

The coverts of this upper country are fewer, less extensive, and more concentrated than in the southern division. Especially round Crawley and the Winchester Racecourse (where they get by sufferance from the H.H.) have they had many merry gallops over miles of smooth and open hillsides.

The lower or "bottom country" is totally different and difficult. It gradually merges into a close mass of almost unbroken woodland. Round Baddesley is a small round vale, fenced with bank-and-ditch, and carrying, like much of the stiff clay of the lower country, a fair—often a good—scent. Elsewhere there occurs the occasional opportunity of crossing a few strong-banked enclosures: and then a short-legged clever horse is useful. But for the most part foxes will run the coverts; and horse and hound and man must be of the stuff that is willing to persevere, and stick to steady work. There are plenty of foxes, not only in the south but all over the country—the supply having increased largely in the last decade or so, forming thus a practical tribute to the success of Colonel Nicoll's twelve years of Mastership.

The days of hunting are Monday and Friday, with an occasion bye: and Monday is for the lower country, while Friday is reserved for the upper. Having commenced our notes by referring to the upper country, we may continue to give precedence to the Friday ground. The meets on that day command much the largest attendance—a fixture near Stockbridge or Ashley bringing considerable numbers over the border

from Lord Radnor's, the Tedworth, the Vine, and the H.H., till a field of a hundred and fifty is sometimes attained. Men will come from a long distance for a gallop over down (the term being in the south of England used synonymously with wold), when they will not go a yard out of their way for a day in the woods.

Some of the chief coverts in the "top country" are those of Winterdown, North Park, Dumper's Oak, Northwood, and Crab Wood; but with luck and a good fox you are soon out in the open from any of them. And some of the leading Friday meets are—Leckford Hut, from which they draw Leckford Plantations and Chilbolton Gorse, with open country all round and every chance of running back to Winterdown and the woods: Crawley Warren, whence, after drawing the warren, they probably fall back to the woodlands. Meeting at Winchester Racecourse, they have Cuckoo Bushes and Worthy Groves, afterwards Northwood, and the larger coverts again. From the Rack-and-Manger, too, they get to Munglees and Winterdown. Wyke Down is the meet for Crab Wood, a very thick and extensive covert near Winchester. Sombourn Park, and Farley Mount, are meets for the strong coverts of Sombourn Wood, Ashley Wood, and No Man's Land. On the western edge of the country is an excellent wood at Mitchelmarsh. It belongs to Hon. R. Dutton, is a certain find, and generally leads to a run through Parnholt. Lower Eldon is the usual meet for it.

Turning southward, to the "bottom country," which is taken on the Monday, we find some good scenting

ground and the chance of a pleasant ride in the little vale about Baddesley, or, rather, between Chilworth Hill and Romsey, with strong woods in the immediate neighbourhood. Baddesley Wood is a boggy place; which you should know your way about, before venturing in without a pilot: and the fences outside are large rough banks, often thickly perforated with rabbit holes.

Chilworth stands on higher ground, with some little open table land in its neighbourhood. Lord's Wood, just beyond, lies in a very rough district with many awkward bogs.

The Chilworth property belongs entirely to Mrs. Fleming; who, like the rest of the covertowners hereabouts, preserves foxes staunchly and goes in but little for game. Nightingale Wood (Lord Mount-Temple's) is a very favourite wood of considerable size. As a matter of fact, the distance between Chilworth and Stoneham is almost continuous woodland. Stoneham Park contains some most useful ground for harbouring foxes—to wit, ferns, rocks, &c. It has, besides, a home covert—a sure find. One of the best runs the Country ever saw was from here. A strong woodland fox took them right up to the north of the country, and was killed at Littleton—a point of at least nine or ten miles, after a run of two hours and twenty-five minutes. Hursley Park is the residence of Sir William Heathcote, who is the largest landowner and one of the best supporters of the Hunt. There is some covert in the Park itself; and Hursley Common, a fine wood close to Cranbury Park, also belongs to Sir William. It contains a great deal of gorse and

fern; and is more like an old forest, with its open glades and wild timber. From here we get into the great chain of woods across the country—Forty Acres, Trod's Copse, Ampfield Wood, &c. The last-named is looked upon as the chief covert in the Hunt, several litters being bred there annually.

Of the Monday meets there is Chilworth Clump Inn, for all the Chilworth district, Lord's Wood, &c. Standing on Chilworth Hill and looking round, the country below would seem to be one great tract of wood on every side. Toothill Brick-kiln or Lusborough Pond are fixed for Nightingale Wood and its neighbours. From the Hut-Inn, Chandler's Ford, the first draw is probably Stoneham; and from Hursley Pond the Hursley Coverts. Standen Gate, near Otterburn Hill, is on the east of the country, adjoining the Hambledon.

Winchester and Southampton are, of course, the two chief quarters from which you may by chance have opportunity of seeing the Hursley. You are not likely to visit the Country from a distance; though, should you be prompted to do so, Winchester is less than two hours from London (Waterloo) and Southampton than two and a half.

THE HAMBLEDON.*

As well as being a much larger country than its next-door neighbour, The Hursley, The Hambledon is more regularly enclosed and fenced—though by no means in the sense of being cramped or confined. Its wold is fairly marked out in widespreading enclosures; its vales are apportioned off by bank-and-hedge-and-ditch into firm sound fields of grass and plough; its woodlands are very strong, but there is always open ground of vale or wold to be reached from them, and a day entirely in the woods is very exceptional indeed. Foxes are generally inclined to leave the great coverts; and seldom double about them after the cubhunting season.

The Hambledon Country is the extreme south-east of Hampshire—the Southampton Water dividing it from the New Forest, which takes up the other half of South Hants. Commencing on the north with wide sloping wolds such as go to make up the body of the H. H. country—it gradually merges into strong vale and a style of soil and culture more akin to Sussex and the country of Lord Leconfield, which adjoins it on the east.

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* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 21, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

Winchester is its extreme nor'-westerly point. From there it runs down to Southampton; and carries fox-hunting along the Southcoast, as near to Gosport and Portsmouth as the fortifications of Portsdown Hill will allow, till it reaches Havant—where Lord Leconfield takes up the thread, lending, however, to the Hambledon a strip of his territory between (approximately) Up Park and the village of Funtingdon. The Hambledon Country, indeed, is (with the exception of a small corner of Lord Leconfield's) the only source from which the soldiers and sailors of these garrison seaports can get their hunting—unless they take the train inland, or the ferry-boat across to the Isle of Wight. Some few of them adopt the sensible plan of keeping their horses at the pretty little town of Bishops Waltham, which besides being nearly in the centre of the country—and easily commanding all the best of it—is only a short distance from the Kennels. The last point is always a desideratum when you are hunting with a single pack. The day's proceedings and duration, the direction and order of the draws, must necessarily be arranged with the hounds as one of the leading considerations. If your starting-point is much the same as theirs you naturally share the benefit. But, besides this and besides the advantage of their company and guidance to covert and home if wanted—there is the opportunity for acquiring a vested interest in the doings of the pack that you will attain in no other way. You may learn to know individual hounds before you see them at work as a body; you can then note them in the field when no one is at your elbow who could help you with name or

description; and you can verify on the road home what you have seen during the day. There are few huntsmen but are glad of a sympathetic interest in their favourites; and there are few who will not cheerfully assist it. We may not all be imbued with such an interest, or care to cultivate it. But there are many of us who do; and to whom it represents a considerable part of the pleasure we derive from foxhunting. Masters of foxhounds and huntservants are naturally those who take the deepest interest in the subject of hounds. But there is no reason that it should be confined entirely to them—though it is undeniable that there are some very few of either class who not only deny the possibility of its existence elsewhere, but would prefer its remaining unrecognised and unencouraged except among themselves. So rare, however, are the instances of individual jealousy attempting to guard the study of hounds as if it were a branch of the Eleusinian mysteries, that they fortunately stand out only as exceptions to prove a strongly marked rule of unselfishness and good feeling.

It is, of course, with a field of moderate dimensions that most opportunity is given to the looker-on of seeing what hounds are doing, and how they do it. And the Hambledon field is at no time a large one—gauged by comparison with what is to be seen with many other packs at a distance from Hampshire.

The kennels are at Droxford, some three or four miles north of Bishops Waltham. Mr. Walter Long, who carries the horn himself, is the son of Mr. W. Jervis-Long, of Preshaw House, who hunted the country previously for twelve seasons. He has had

the country seven years, and has built his present pack almost entirely from the Cottesmore Kennel; and with it has been very successful both in killing foxes and showing sport. Preshaw, with its good coverts, lies so as to overlook the down, or wold, district — hill after hill succeeding each other in smooth strong dip and rise across the whole north to the country from Winchester by Hambledon to Idsworth. So much more severe are the Hambledon hills than the milder undulation of the H. H., that when hounds find a scent on which they can extend themselves it is very difficult to ride the line with them, and it is generally advisable to cling as much as possible to the upper ridges. On this light thin soil, though, scent is by no means an everyday commodity; and at all times it is necessary for hounds to be close at their fox if they are to press him. Beacon Hill and Old Winchester Hill are the two great landmarks of the north of the country: and the latter hill, with its background of covert, is regarded by most foxes found near it as a sort of city of refuge for which they should make at once.

The north-east or Petersfield corner comprises some pleasant vale of the Sussex type. Amid it the "Petersfield Hangers" form quite a feature—being hillside covert so steep that not only would riding through be out of the question, but it is the practice of the wood-cutters to let the wood as they cut it find its way to the bottom by its own weight.

The Foxhunting Atlas shows most plainly the natural geographical types of the several parts of the country. From it will be readily seen that south of

Hambledon and its hilly wold comes a great stretch of woodland, written down as the Forest of Bere, but now more generally known as "The Liberties"—and reaching almost from Bishop's Waltham to the eastern edge of the country. It is only, however, in the extreme east that the mass of wood is so great that there is anything to preclude the feasibility of driving a fox quickly into the open. Even there much of the timber has been swept away, and given place to agriculture. Once in the open a fox has the choice before him of turning up over the wold and making for Old Winchester Hill, or of running the nice vale which, nearly all grass about Southwick, continues with grass and plough intermixed for many miles along the railway to Bishopstoke. As the Atlas would convey, there is scarcely a break in the style of country, as you pass Wickham, Botley, take in Bishop's Waltham, and go on by Durley to Bishopstoke. The enclosures are small, the fences are hedges (mostly trimmed, never laid) on a bank with a ditch on one side and often on both; the soil is a stiff clay, and scent is generally fair, often good. The Southwick neighbourhood, indeed, is considered the cream of the country; and a find there seldom fails to lead to good results. Last season (1880-1881) the Hunt was treated to two of their best runs from Southwick.

It will be easily understood that for the Hambledon vale and woodland a clever horse, shortlegged and strong-backed, is required: while on the hills a turn of speed is desirable, or even essential.

The hunting days of the Hambledon are Monday,

Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, arranged much as follows :—

Monday is generally for the eastern hills and the woods of Idsworth and district, or, as it is more often termed, the Horndean side. Idsworth House is the seat of Sir C. Jervoise, the oldest subscriber, and, with his son Col. Jervoise, one of the staunchest supporters of the Hunt. He has many large woods with plenty of foxes in each. Besides Idsworth, Horndean is a frequent meet hereabouts—for Horndean Holt etc. Butser Hill and Highden Wood are also often advertised—the latter being a large covert, with hills and light ground close at hand. Barn Green, Waterloo Inn and Leigh Park (the seat of Sir F. Fitzwigram) are the chief meets for the old Forest. Occasionally Southwick Park may be fixed for a Monday—giving the vale country on that day. But more often Wednesday is the day for the Vale, and for such meets as Holywell House. Here they have a string of nice coverts (Queen's Liberty the largest) bordering the stream that runs from north to south of the country, and where foxes are always to be found. Nearer Fareham is a good and frequent fixture, Old Vine, with nice vale till Portsdown Hill—a kind of frowning seawall—is reached. From little Park (the property of a good sportsman, Mr. C. Radclyffe), you get into some woods of considerable extent, such as Hall Court and Fairthorns. Swanswick is an occasional meet beyond the railway towards Netley.

The alternate Friday is for the Preshaw side, and again for hills and strong woods. There are several of the latter on the Preshaw estate, with, of course,

abundance of foxes. Corhampton House (Mr. King-Wyndham's) is at no great distance from Preshaw; and, like it, has good coverts and many foxes. Warnford Park points to Old Winchester Hill and neighbourhood—Warnford Osier Beds and small coverts along the bottom, whence a fox will generally cross over the hilltop.

The other Friday is employed on the strip of country lent by Lord Leconfield on the eastern border. To reach this, hounds have to be sent on overnight, generally to Idsworth House or Stanstead Park (Mr. G. Wilder's). In these weeks the Saturday meet is fixed in the Preshaw, or regular Friday, country.

Saturday may be for either of the two extreme northern corners of Petersfield or Winchester. In the former, Baising Park (Mr. Nicholson's) near Petersfield is situated in some pleasant vale country. West Meon Hut and Westbury House are both for the coverts of Mr. Lewis, an excellent fox preserver. Near Winchester, again, we get Longwood House (Lord Northesk's) where are goodly little coverts and open downs; while Morstead Village has small woodlands and a similar kind of open country near it.

LORD COVENTRY'S.*

The Severnside, from Worcester to Tewkesbury for its length: its breadth from the Malvern Hills on the west, to the North Cotswold and The Warwickshire boundaries on the east—will convey in some degree the whereabouts and extent of the country hunted by Lord Coventry. The southern quarter of Worcestershire would make an equally good definition; and, as most counties have their special peculiarities affecting the fox hunting in their midst, perhaps the latter specification may be found the more explanatory. Worcestershire is in character, as it is in position, something between Warwickshire and Herefordshire. While it has the small enclosures of the latter, and many of its orchards, gardens, and paddocks, its fences are more of a mild Warwickshire type. That part of it hunted by Lord Coventry is—with the striking exception of the Malvern and Bredon Hill and the rugged north-eastern corner containing the Ridgeway—more open and level than the bulk of Herefordshire. The Malvern Hills run, a bold and abrupt range of some fifteen hundred feet in height,

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 14 and 15, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

and which foxes will very seldom face, down his western border and into the Ledbury Country. The Bredon Hill is an isolated eminence, more practicable for foxhounds in the extreme south-east; and, with these two landmarks in view from end to end of the country, a stranger should find it difficult to lose his way by daylight after his first week's experience. The Ridgeway is a rough hilly woodland overlooking the Avon and the narrow vale separating it from The Warwickshire Territory. What with the Severn and the Avon, Lord Coventry's country is singularly well dealt with in the matter of river-water and heavy vale—the two streams forming their junction at Tewkesbury after piercing the country, end to end, from two different directions. Thus in times of severe rain, such as in the years 1879-80, many miles of ground are under the flood, and remain deep and wet for months afterwards. A cold clay soil follows the course of the rivers, and is common to a great part of lower Worcestershire. A wet season accordingly places the lower ground at the worst advantage. To carry a scent it requires a dry and warm rather than a wet and chilly winter: while, to offer pleasant riding, the less water has been soaked into the soil the better. Much of the country, again, is a rich loam rather than a clay soil; and this, on the contrary, requires wet. Without it, the grass may carry a scent, but the plough will not. A great deal of grass is scattered over the country in small meadows, especially round and near the numerous villages. Agriculture, which would appear to be the staple industry of Worcestershire, is carried on chiefly on the principle of small

enclosures, and, when hounds are running in some parts of the country, you are no sooner into a field than you should be gathering your reins for a jump out again. A rash horse might even swing you out over a second fence before you had fairly collected him, and yourself, after landing over the first. Fortunately the fences themselves are not of a description that need make even such an accident appalling—unless it led to jumping into an apple-orchard. If they *were* strong and high, as well as close together, it would be often difficult to ride and difficult to see, when hounds are going fast. As it is, they are generally small flying hedges mended with timber, and often, though not always, guarded by a ditch. The hedge is seldom encouraged to grow to any appalling height, nor are the thorns stoutly bound and entwined. But timber is plentiful, the Worcestershire farmers leave no gap, and post-and-rails fill up every weak place. It is upon the size and strength of these, upon the deepness of the ground, and upon the presence and depth of an unforeseen ditch, that the variety and occasional difficulty of crossing the country depends. As a rule, to keep hounds in sight is well within the scope of a fair horseman and a strong useful horse—"useful," you will remember, being the complimentary epithet earned by Mr. Sawyer's horses when transplanted from the provinces to more fashionable Market Harboro'. Limited size of enclosures and frequency of the fences are, of course, all against hounds—and in favour of a fox, when he is tired, or by nature a short runner. Not only are hounds then constantly

hindered by the fences; but every inducement is held out to a fox to dodge when pressed, or to run his foil when going at his leisure well in front.

The country round Twining-Fleet, however, near Tewkesbury, in the extreme south, is of quite a different type—being a beautiful tract of rich grass land, fenced with strong oxers, and over which hounds always carry a head. But the coverts in this vale, being only small osierbeds, will not stand frequent visits, though foxes are well and carefully preserved.

Lord Coventry has excellent Kennels at his seat at Croome Court near Severn Stoke (and eight miles from Worcester): and, as is to be expected from one whose judgment on the subject of hounds is so fully acknowledged and so freely sought, his pack is not only of high class and appearance, but of great merit in their work. He first took hounds in 1867; and began his pack with the purchase of several lots at the sale of the South Wilts and the Quorn, and from various other sources. Since then the friendship of the Duke of Rutland has given him constant access to the best Belvoir blood; and he has also had the use of stud hounds from Brocklesby (among them Random and more lately Flamer). The greatest instance of his success was in "Rambler," the present patriarch of the pack, and who, though nine years old, is still quite able to take his part in killing a fox with the young ones. Lord Coventry's Rambler is by Lord Fitzhardinge's Collier, out of a bitch who combined the most favourite strains of Lord Henry Bentinck's blood—and he is already the sire of more

than sixty couple of working hounds in different good Kennels.

In the far north are two good woods, Bow Wood and Grafton Wood, which have shown much sport of late years. These are neutral with The Worcestershire; that Hunt taking them one month, and Lord Coventry the next; and both are the property of his Lordship. Peopleton is a favourite meet which may lead to them or to the coverts of the Rev. James Cook and Mr. Acton. In the North of the country the enclosures (all deep plough) are found much larger, and ditches are almost invariably dug.

On the northeast or Ridgway district, the chief of the large woods are Weethley (neutral with The Warwickshire), Old Yewel and Salford Coppice. Very stout foxes are found in these coverts, and great sport has been had from them during the last three or four seasons—a point of eight or nine miles into the Worcestershire country having been by no means uncommon.

The coverts of the country are generally of a very manageable size; and are almost entirely natural plantation and wood—as opposed to gorse and other artificial covert. There are strong woods enough for all cubhunting and schooling purposes without the country being in any way blocked by woodland. Thus there is the chain of woods between Pershore and Croome, chiefly belonging to Lord Coventry; there is the wooded length of the Ridgeway, well typified by Rough Hill Wood at its far end; and there are the good scenting coverts on Bredon Hill. There is also good woodland at Old Hills across the Severn

and at Suckley in the far North-west. The supply of foxes throughout the country is quite up to requirements.

The two rivers are of course apt to keep foxes found near them to particular lines, though occasionally a fox will set them at defiance, breast the water, and make a distant point. In the case of the Severn this may be awkward enough for the field; for with the exception of the two ferries, at Fixham and near the Rydd, there is no means of crossing hetween Worcester and Upton.

The hunting days are Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday; and the meets are arranged as the demands of the country may seem to suggest. Thursday, however, is more often the day on which hounds are out near the kennels, or Bredon Hill, for which the meet is probably Nafford Mill, Kemerton Quarries, or Elmley Village. Among their best meets hereabouts are Brockeridge Common, Severn End and Pirton Village. Brockeridge Common, being on the edge of the country nearest to Cheltenham, is also the most thickly attended. On the Malvern side are Bransford Station, Suckley, Powick, Newland and Old Hills. Lower down is The Rydd (the property of Sir E. Lechmere, a true fox-preserver), with nice coverts and a good country round. From the Cliffe, which is in the same property, they had the best run of last season—fifty minutes with a kill in the Team.

One point that should be noticed in connection with hounds for Worcestershire is the absolute necessity for their possessing pluck and hardihood to face the

blackthorn, which grows so freely in the coverts and punishes hounds very severely.

Worcester and its environs do most towards swelling Lord Coventry's field. Malvern is more of a summer resort than a hunting quarter. The little town of Pershore is not far from the centre of the Hunt and only four or five miles from the Kennels. Worcester is three hours from London (Paddington); and Pershore, being attainable only by a slower train, requires about another half hour. Worcester has The Worcestershire Kennels and country at hand: Pershore is within reach of The Warwickshire and The North Cotswold. Between Worcester and the Kennels at Croome, and along the north of the country, is pleasant open ground of mixed grass and plough; and the same continues down the east bank of the Severn to the junction of the rivers—improving after it passes the Kennels, till the Strensham district is looked upon as the best scenting ground in the Hunt. There is nice fair hunting country again between Worcester and Malvern about Bransford; and again farther south near The Rydd. But this side of the Severn is often very wet and deep. Bredon Hill is rather a favourite place in the interests of hounds; and its summit offers a scene quite different from the rest of the country. There you find yourself among heath and stonewalls; but it is capital scenting ground, and its foxes are very strong, often standing nearly two hours before hounds. From the top you look down upon the Avon half embracing the foot of the hill on the west; while northward lies a good vale, and a run from Cropthorne to Bredon

Hill is an event of frequent occurrence—though it is difficult to induce a fox to take the converse direction and make a point from the hill across the vale. To the north-west of Pershore are several strong coverts, notably Tiddesley Wood (some 300 or 400 acres, and Lady Wood, a large wood belonging to Sir John Sebright; Croome Perry Wood the Broughton Woods and Deerfold Wood, belonging to Lord Coventry. Tiddesley Wood and Drake's Broughton are, perhaps, most frequently advertised, when this range of coverts is to be drawn.

THE GROVE.*

If the Grove as a country does not typify all the rapid requirements of the modern school of fox-hunting, the Grove Hounds (Lord Galway's) have long held high rank, and been a source from which the pack of nearly every flying country has derived assistance. Lord Galway's pack, is, in fact, one of the oldest in the kingdom. On the late Mr. Foljambe first taking hounds, he purchased it from Lord Scarboro'—in the year 1825 or 1826. Lord Galway (father of the present) became Master in 1858, on the health of the present Lord Scarborough failing; and finally bought the hounds from Mr. Foljambe in 1866. He continued to hunt the country till his death in 1876, when his son the present Lord Galway took over the Mastership and the horn. The Grove Hounds are quite as celebrated for their working power as for their rich quality—and both virtues are carefully maintained as ever (a short note on their recent breeding will be found farther on).

But it is with a Country rather than its Hounds, the present series of sketches has to do—that the

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 9, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

stranger may learn where he will be going, what he will ride over, and what he should ride upon. The Grove, then, is in the main a plough country, occupying the north of Nottinghamshire and the south-east corner of Yorkshire. It is divided from the Lincolnshire countries (Burton and Brocklesby) by the river Trent; is separated by the Don from the Badsworth; lends a feasible strip on the north and north-west to Lord Fitzwilliam's almost impracticable territory; and has the Rufford on its southern, or Nottinghamshire, border. Doncaster and Retford, the one at the top, the other nearly at the bottom of the country (besides Worksop on the M. S. & L. Railway) are its chief towns (each about three hours from King's Cross, London); and it does honour to the yearly festival at the former place by rousing the cubs in its neighbourhood on the mornings of the race meeting. It has light limestone and sand over three parts of its extent; and deep clay on the fourth, where it adjoins the Burton. It has collieries and hills on its south-west corner, and runs to the flattest fen on the opposite one; and, strong a contrast as these two districts offer in most ways, they share the privilege of possessing nearly all the grass in the Hunt. A leading feature, again, in the Grove country is found in the Dukeries, which it shares about equally with the Rufford, and which provide charming spring and autumn hunting for both packs. The Dukeries as a whole have been already described under the head of The Rufford. That part of them within the Grove boundaries includes Welbeck Abbey (the seat of the Duke of Portland), the greater part of

Clumber Park (the seat of the Duke of Newcastle), and Worksop Manor (also the property of the Duke of Newcastle, but the residence of Mr. I. Cookson). Welbeck has a splendid open park in addition to its large coverts; so has Worksop; but Clumber, as far as the Grove draw it, is a collection of great woods, with only a field or so between each—bracken and fern within and cultivated ground without—and only two or three grass meadows by the lake.

But, beyond the Dukeries—which, after all, are very limited, being only, as the name implies, ducal estates wooded and parked) the Grove is an open, gently undulating country, that a mistaken system of agriculture has worked with the plough, and that may yet, under pressure of foreign import, possibly relapse into honest grazing ground. Under present conditions it is not high scenting ground. How can it be, when the surface is constantly upset and disturbed and infected? A fox smells sweet to a hound or even a foxhunter. But as well ask the latter to try Châteax Margaux after '34 port, as ask a foxhound to do duty to fox while his nose is reeking with the high flavoured assistants that science dictates for soil-improvement. A foxhound does not care for violets, and a sniff of eau de Cologne will make him shun you for a day. But he likes a rich pungent smell—and I am by no means sure that he would not (till taught better) prefer to roll about in a fallow just manured with the overplus of the Lincolnshire fish markets rather than have an hour to himself after the "biggest fox whatever was seen." From our point of view the fascination working upon his nose is

in proportion to the degree of nastiness: and we try to prove it by asserting that his instinct will make him run a red herring, while education is necessary to make him run a fox. But the fact remains, that a good pronounced odour will drive a weaker one out of his nostrils, or at all events act detrimentally. In plain language, a single well-manured field is five minutes' law to a fox: and well-farmed arable is seldom long free from the tainting effects of savoury top dressing. The distinction of smell is altogether apart from the delicacy of nose which allows a hound to discriminate between fox and hare—as exemplified in a pack once owned by a still-living sportsman, which in the same season and in the same country, killed thirty-two foxes and seventy-five hares, never changing from one scent to the other when settled to a line.

These remarks, though, are applicable to plough countries generally—not to the Grove only or especially. It may or may not, be relevant, either, to assert that there are many more good packs of hounds in provincial countries than in the Shires—a fact easily to be understood when it is borne in mind how frequently Masterships are passed from hand to hand in the Midlands, and also how little the necessary virtues of a foxhound vary between one country and another. A foxhound like a poet must be born; and, like a gentleman, it takes three generations to breed him. The poetry of form and the purity of birth are only to be seen in old kennels; and many of those old kennels exist in out-of-the-way places. This brings in a note that the Meynell blood (perhaps

the oldest established and authenticated—for the Meynell Kennelbook goes back to 1818) has been prominently used by Lord Galway in recent years, as also the old and valuable strains from the kennels of Lord Portsmouth, Lord Yarboro', Mr. Parry, the Duke of Rutland, &c.

Lord Galway has four hunting days—Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday—and occasionally gives a Saturday byeday. Even this requires a wide extent of well-preserved country; but, in addition, he is able to lend all north of the river Torne to Lord Fitzwilliam—while the fen beyond Awkley and Misterton is practically useless. Foxes run over it occasionally, it is true; and the smooth grass holds a great scent. But the open drains are all wide and deep; and many of them quite unjumpable. We shall continue our notes best by glancing in turn at the district in which each of the four days is usually spent.

The Kennels, then, being about two miles outside Retford, are just on the border between the Clay and the Forest—the latter being the remains of old Sherwood Forest, including the Dukeries and the country up to Serlby Hall (the residence of the Master) near Bawtry. And this is the Monday ground. Once clear of the Dukeries, there are no very large coverts; but Mr. Foljambe has two or three strong places at Osberton, *e.g.*, Manton Plantation and Scofton Wood. From Osberton to Bawtry the country is all open, with small coverts here and there; and the whole is a light sandy soil, whereon scent is very uncertain. The enclosures are large,

and the fences only low quickset without a ditch. There is, indeed, nothing to stop a horse if hounds run, except want of pace; and pace is therefore his first requisite. The Dukeries may either lead to a run out here, to a turn in the kindred woodlands of the Rufford, or to remaining in the same neighbourhood all day. The ordinary meet for the Dukeries is Trueman's Lodge, which is situated just between Worksop and Clumber, and commands all three big places. Above this, Osberton is a frequent advertisement, for Mr. Foljambe's coverts; and Checker House generally points to the same. Scrooby Top House and Serlby are both for Lord Galway's nice little coverts. Blyth Law Hills are sandy rising ground, with some little covert upon them.

Tuesday is for the Doncaster side—from about Walling Wells up to Braithwell and Fossington round to Ankley and Misterton. Up to Rossington you ride chiefly over a limestone soil, with rough hedges and good ditches; but above this you get on to what is known in Yorkshire as "Car"—soft black ground with wide open drains, carrying a strong scent, but in wet weather often too deep and boggy to carry horse and rider. From Rossington to Edlington Wood (in Lord Fitzwilliam's country) is all Car, and is a very frequent line. The same kind of limestone plough is found round by Finningley, till again we get to car and fen—Finningley Park (Mr. Lister's), for Finningley Woods, being about the farthest meet. Maltby is usually the meet on the morning following the Leger; and Sandbeck Park (the seat of Lord Scarboro') is also generally fixed for the same week.

Maltby Ridings is a splendid wood of Lord Scarborough's, with great firm grass rides through it along which a carriage may be driven—every ride meeting at a common centre, whence each quarter of the wood can be seen. Stainton Village is a fixture for another strong wood of Lord Scarborough's adjoining—a beautiful covert, always full of foxes. Tickhall Spittal or Hesley Hall (Mr. Whitaker's), are for Hunster Wood, Martin Beck, and Swinnow Wood—also nice coverts. Rossington (Mr. Streatfield's) has the Low Woods on the border of the car; and North Carlton is for Walling Wells (the estate of Sir Thomas White and famous for foxes), and for the Firbeck coverts.

Thursday is as a rule devoted to the south-west or Derbyshire country; to which hounds are often taken by train: and which is also a limestone soil of tolerably light consistency. It has, however, more grass than the centre of the country and carries a better scent. As with the rest of The Grove, the more wet the stronger the scent, is here the rule. Indeed, the more mud your horse splashes about, the more likely are hounds to run. The fences hereabouts are mostly fair hedge-and-ditch; enclosures of medium size, and the grass is generally rough and course. Coalpits are worked all down the border—about Aston, Harthill, Clown, &c. Aston Hall (Mr. Verelst's) is a very favourite meet, to draw Brampton Gorse and Nicker Wood. A gallop from Aston across to Laughton Le Morthern is a frequent and pleasant occurrence, and takes them over a very sporting vale and a good deal of grass. Laughton, standing on a hill, is a promi-

nent mark; and there is no covert till Throapham is reached—where is a common and a nice gorse. On the far west the river Rother bounds the country—only because beyond it the ground is too hilly and the collieries too frequent, to admit of pleasurable fox-hunting. Other meets on this side are Dinnington for Dinnington Gorse; Barlborough Hall, for some large and good woods of Mr. De Rhodes'; Steetley Bar, whence they go to Whitwell Wood (some two thousand acres belonging to the Duke of Portland, and having good grass rides radiating from the centre); Thorpe Salvin, for the covert there; and, occasionally Harthill, for Norwood (a fine covert of the Duke of Leeds').

Friday is on the Lincolnshire side of the Kennels, in what is always spoken of as The Clays, being a deep clay district between Retford and the Trent. It is only some twelve miles long by seven wide, and hounds often work their way through it all in a day. But Treswell Wood makes it fully able to bear one day every week; and the other coverts, though only small gorses and thorns, all stand their share. Treswell Wood belongs to Mr. Vernon of Grove Hall, who makes the stronghold so famous that it bears the name of "The Clay Nurseries." It supplies foxes enough for all the country-side; they are all stub-bred; but they soon learn to look upon the Wood as their chief refuge, and invariably run thither when found anywhere in the vale. It is about 150 acres in size, and its rides are very deep. Hounds are constantly in it, scattering the foxes abroad—from early cubhunting till late spring; and they meet for it at

Hall Grove about twice in three weeks throughout the season. From Grassthorpe in the south to Misterton in the north is the extent of the vale, the whole of which is made up of small enclosures stoutly fenced with stake-and-bound hedges and broad ditches. It rides soundest and best after heavy rain—and then it is also that hounds go quickest and you must have a strong horse and a powerful jumper. In wet weather it is better scenting ground than common. Darlton is a meet for all the far corner of the Vale; and from here they may draw Babington Springs, a nice ash covert. They have also a good gorse at Fledborough belonging to Lord Manvers, both coverts being under the charge of Mr. G. Billyard. Meeting at Sturton they go to a capital covert in Fenton Gorse, and to Rampton Thorns, both of which belong to Mr. Foljambe. Laneham Covert (blackthorn) was bought expressly for the Hunt by the late Duke of Portland. Gringley-on-the-Hill, on the north edge of the Vale, is for Gringley Gorse (the Duke of Portland's) and Walkeringham Thorns—from which there is every possibility of a fox taking them among the soft ground and open drains of the Car beyond.

THE WEST NORFOLK.*

The extent of Norfolk over which Mr. Hamond might at the present moment hunt is practically only limited by distance from kennel and strength of establishment. His Country still remains The West Norfolk: but there is no other pack in the county; and the boundary-line only exists to mark where the former Lords Hasting hunted from Melton Constable, and in case their Hunt should be again revived. Thus, unhunted ground stretches away to the east till the sea is reached. On the other three sides are fen and seaboard, except where the Suffolk hounds draw on south border of Norfolk; and practically the West Norfolk country stands isolated—a slightly raised plateau of sound hunting ground above the half-encircling marsh and sea.

King's Lynn and Swaffham are its chief towns, each about three hours from London (Liverpool-street or St. Pancras). The kennels are at Great Massingham, about the centre of the country, on Mr. Hamond's own property, and about a dozen miles from either town.

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* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 11 and 17, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

It might be imagined that, Norfolk being essentially a shooting county, the interests of foxhunting would be looked upon not only as having no place, but as being absolutely antagonistic. On the contrary, foxes have every chance given them in Norfolk, are plentiful everywhere; and, as there are lots of rabbits for them, they interfere but little with partridges or pheasants. Shooting undoubtedly holds great sway in the county: but the large proprietors are unselfish enough not to demand a monopoly, nor to wish to oust the pursuit which finds fun for the majority. Thus they encourage foxes, and are quite satisfied if in return their shooting arrangements are duly considered, and game not needlessly driven away on the eve of their beat. In Mr. Hamond's country a great part of the shooting—particularly in the centre—is left in the hands of the farmers, who are all keen foxhunters. In the majority of instances they farm several hundred or even a thousand acres; and being obliged to ride something in order to get round their farms, they take care to provide themselves with useful young horses, which are generally worth double the money at five years old that they cost at two at Rugby or Horncastle. And an excellent school it is for educating a young one, especially on the light or upper country where the fences are small and easy, and teaching can commence at the rudiments. A young horse will always jump a big place when his blood is up, if he has acquired thorough confidence over small and varied fences. But he is likely enough to be made shy and shifty, to say nothing of the chance of accident, if "outfaced" or terrified in his early efforts. All the

Castle Rising and the Massingham district, and the Sandringham side, is of the easiest type—thorn fences on banks, with occasional small ditches, and sheep-hurdles everywhere: and the young farmers, in making their rounds, seldom go to the trouble of opening a gate. East of the Kennels, again, is a much more strongly fenced country—the banks are big, the ditches are double, and the thorn used to grow to great strength. Many of the old hedges have in recent years been cut and lowered; but still there is always enough growth to constitute a fence above the bank, and weak interstices are filled up with stout thorn wattle. From Watton up to Fakenham is all fenced in this way; and is a strong good soil, upon which grass freely intermingles with the plough. The light country of the west, on the contrary, is all light, flinty, arable—wild and open, with many acres of waste heath and gorse upon which rabbits flourish by hundreds. The land is scantily populated; and you may ride a bee line from the Kennels down to Hilborough with scarcely a cottage in view by the way. Towards Sandringham, too, there is nothing but light galloping over quite an open country. In the winter all the sheep are hurdled in their turnip-pens; there are no cattle to soil the ground; and with the surface thus sweet and clean, hounds have every chance in the lighter country. They want rain, and plenty of it. Given this, they will run well. The ground game may be puzzling to youthful noses; but there is so much of it that hounds seldom take long to acquire a proper sense of discrimination.

Sound, good, feet of course are very necessary for

hounds in the lighter part of the country, where flints most abound. And in this requisite Mr. Hamond's hounds are by no means deficient, while at the same time they are remarkable for bone and strength of limb. The pack has been in existence for fifteen years. It was first founded on drafts from Milton; received much assistance at the hands of Mr. Chaworth Musters (cousin to Mr. Hamond); and has since been maintained by constant return to the Fitzwilliam blood, and by infusions from the kennels of The Belvoir, Lord Coventry, Lord Fitzhardinge, &c.

The West Norfolk is, on the whole, quite a fair scenting country. Dry weather does not suit any of it, and least of all does it suit the light plough. But after plenty of wet, hounds can generally run over any part of it. Foxes, too, are ready enough to travel; for the coverts are but small, and the hills, such as merit the denomination, are long, sweeping, and unbroken—so that there is none of the temptation to a fox to turn and double that is offered by short steep hill-and-dale. The only large coverts are those of Lord Cholmondeley at Houghton—some fine woods just to the north of the kennels, and of great value for cub-hunting. They stand in the middle of the "light country," which elsewhere depends for its foxes as much upon its open heaths as on plantations or wooded coverts. The supply, as already mentioned, is good everywhere; and the enforced rest of two frosty winters has done much to assist the stock. Amid the wild heather of the west a fox is to be found at any moment. The gorse bushes and dry sand suit him just as well as they do the conies; and

he is glad to make his bed with food always ready at hand.

Mr. Hamond hunts three days in the week—fixing his days and meets as most convenient to the country, local markets entering largely into the calculation. He seldom goes farther west (nor, indeed, would the fen allow him) than the Line between King's Lynn and Downham (or Stow Bardolph), nor farther south than Stow Ferry, Oxborough, Stanford, and Merton (Lord Walsingham's). Mr. Villebois of Marham, who was many years Master of the West Norfolk, assisted Mr. Hamond for several seasons after the latter's accession —by keeping up a pack to hunt the country south of King's Lynn and Swaffham.

The "light country," then, occupies the greater part of Mr. Hamond's territory; and in it you will want a well-bred, galloping horse—while for the eastern vale your mount must be a sturdy hunter, who has a leg to spare in difficulties, and whose back can lift him on to a bank and across a ditch. Massingham is surrounded by the former kind of ground, which reaches away almost to the sea. Foxes lie in the open heather all round the kennels; and they are found in plenty also at Rougham—where Mr. North has capital coverts and always sends a large contingent into the field. There are the gorse coverts, known as Cook's, Kendle's, Sewell's, Soigné and several others—some existing when the late Lord Leicester (Mr. Coke) hunted the country, and some are new. Hillington (Sir William Ffolke's) is another good meet and draw; and so is Anmer, where Mr. Coldham preserves as heartily as if he still hunted hard. Congham has many nice little

coverts; and Gayton, where Lord Romney shoots, is another good place. At Sandringham are many plantations and rough heaths, with one nice fox-covert in addition. From the latter hounds last season exemplified this side of the country to the full by running for two hours almost entirely over heaths—killing their fox. The rabbit holes of the light country, by the way, are a fruitful source of falls, even to the wariest. Other favourite resorts on this side are Narford, Middleton Towers (close to Lynn, and the residence of Sir Lewis Jarvis, who has three sons hunting), Ashwicken (Mr. Groom's), Hunstanton (where Mr. Le Strange has many foxes), and in the south, notably Marham (Mr. Villebois'). It should be mentioned that Lord Leicester owns some sixty thousand acres in the Hunt—over much of which the tenants are given the right of shooting, some also hire, and all do their best to further foxhunting.

The Vale, or strong country, runs up as above-mentioned from about Watton, taking in Necton, Bradenham, &c., up to Rainham and Fakenham in the north. Besides the places named (all of which, except the last, are sources of sport) there are good natural coverts at Pickenham, and the strongest wood of the district at Saham. Tittleshall, again, is another good meet in the Vale.

THE BEDALE.*

By no means the worst of the Yorkshire Countries are The Bedale and Lord Zetland's—which, by the way, have so many points in common that taking them in succession gives little room for any incisive comparison. Diffuse description of both would involve considerable repetition; for much that may be said of The Bedale will naturally apply equally to Lord Zetland's. Both are divided pretty equally between low level vale, and hills rising into moorland. Both of them possess more grass than is found in the other countries of Yorkshire—their hills being almost entirely turf, and their vale mixed grazing land and plough. The fences, whether on hill or vale, are very similar with either Hunt—as we shall see: and the scenting properties in either territory are on the whole very much on a par.

The two countries occupy the north-west border of Yorkshire, take in the beds of the several rivers running along the foot of the hills that border on Westmoreland—and the fox is hunted as far up the latter as rock and moorland allow.

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* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 5, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

The Bedale, besides having the dales and forests of Westmoreland to back it up on the west, has the Hambledon Hills facing it on the east. Thus a channel is formed through which the rainfall of the upper ground rushes southward in several streams. All the lower country is in this way cut up and in some degree marred by the confluent rivers—no less than three of which (in addition to the Cod along its margin) run down the Bedale vale, to form the Ouse of the York-and-Ainsty. These three are the Wisk, the Swale, and the Yore. The first-named is just jumpable in places. But the other two are not; and the Swale running through the length of the country, has in a distance of twenty miles only three bridges, besides that of the railway—which is not available for hunting purposes. Foxes appear to swim the rivers like otters, and to make their points quite irrespective of the opposing streams. Hounds of course make no inquiry as to the propinquity of a bridge: and are generally over before it would be possible to stop them—even if desired. And thus, in the case of the Swale, the field is often left on one side, while fox and hounds go on beyond with the fun to themselves. Occasionally it has been a matter of difficulty for even the staff to recover the line of pursuit: and not very long ago the pack crossed the boundary and went a full hour's run into the York Country before they could be reached.

A curious old Roman Road, the Leeming Lane, also cuts through the country from north to south—Catterick Bridge to Borough Bridge—nearly side by side with the Swale. It turns neither right nor left,

pursuing an almost equally unbending course—upwards through Lord Zetland's, and downwards through the York-and-Ainsty ; and a drive along it will lay before you the bulk of the two former countries. The Kennels are built beside it, about midway between Bedale and Scruton (the residence of the Master)—on a high point overlooking the vale to the east and the hills to the west. For, all to the east of Leeming Lane is lowland (heavy to the north, lighter to the south) ; and another narrow valley bears the railway, from Northallerton, between two ranges of hills to Leyburn—which is the farthest point whither hunting operations are purposely carried. The western line of demarcation, indeed, runs considerably inside the area coloured on Stanford's Map ; and, approximately speaking, may be drawn from Leyburn, by Middleham, to Masham, and from Masham to Skeldin and Eavestone. A fox might, no doubt, be run still farther westward ; but it would be difficult to find him, and occasionally hazardous to pursue where crags crop up and wooded precipices unexpectedly drop. The grass looks tempting, and the stonewalls seem built to jump ; but, the farther west we get, the more rugged becomes the hillsides and the more broken the beds of the stream, till the scene becomes more akin to the home of the chamois than of the fox. The stonewalls grow higher, stronger, and more frequent, as you rise from the low country and get more fully among the sheepwalks. Built of loose round stones, they are pleasant enough jumping as long as their dimensions keep within bounds. On the upper ground, again, there is always a scent—whether on

the grass or the highest moorland reached by hounds. The Vale, however, varies much in its scenting properties. The north—say, from above Scruton to Cowton—and on into the Hurworth—is stiff clay, chiefly under the plough, and irrigated, as it were, by the Swale and the Wisk. It carries a capital scent, and is looked upon as some of the best sporting ground in the Hunt. West of this (beyond Catterick and Leeming Lane) the ground becomes undulating and gradually hilly—till it merges into the western moorlands. The centre of the vale (Bedale, Gatenby, &c.) contains rather more grass, and is fair scenting ground. But as we work south, and touch the edge of the York-and-Ainsty, the country gets gradually lighter, the soil less capable of holding a scent, and the fences small, almost to insignificance. The fences of the Bedale Vale are nowhere very big or difficult; and are of the simple hedge-and-ditch type. But whereas in the north the hedges grow well, though clipped down to a level that interferes neither with your view of the hounds nor the safety of your neck, and the ditches are well dug—in the south the hedges would in most cases fail to stop a pony, and in many, indeed, would scarcely carry a poacher's snare. This is, as it happens, all to the disadvantage of the hounds and huntsman: for the largest fields of the week are on the York side. Small fences and a sandy weak-scenting soil are only too encouraging to a galloping field; giving the latter frequent opportunity of putting themselves between fox and hounds. As a general rule, the Bedale fields are anything but large; and, except in the south, fifty is almost an outside

number. Most of these will be farmers—who, throughout the country, are keenly wedded to the sport. Resident and foxhunting landowners there are few—a great drawback to the country, and a difficulty of some consequence in the case of a subscription pack.

West of Ripon, we get again upon hills—a rough but sporting country, of moorland, grass, and stone-walls, which until the last year or two has not been much hunted, but which the present Master is striving hard to utilise. Its natural qualifications are sterling enough—if only local influence will, as is hoped, assist to develope them.

Major Dent has now had the country three seasons; and hunts the hounds himself. The present pack was founded in 1856 by Lord Feversham, who bought the Forfarshire Hounds, and added lots from Sir Richard Sutton's sale. Lord Feversham himself sold his hounds in 1867; but many of the best were purchased on behalf of the Bedale Hunt by Mr. J. B. Booth, the late master, and drafts from the Brocklesby and other Kennels obtained to make up the pack. Major Dent has recruited his Kennel largely from Lord Zetland's and Mr. Lane Fox's; and has gone to The Milton and The Belvoir for blood to cross with that at home. The Bedale Country, however, is of much older date. It originally formed part of the immense track hunted by The Raby Hounds, the property of the Earl of Darlington, who, about the year 1794, gave up the Badsworth and took the Raby Country (including the present Bedale). As a separate Hunt, the Bedale was originated by Mr.

Mark Milbank, of Thorp Perron, near Bedale, in 1832.

The coverts of The Bedale are all either whins or natural and comparatively small woods and plantations. There are no strong woodlands in the Hunt; and the only exception to the rule of small coverts is in the case of the Duke of Leeds' fine woods at Hornby—which, however, have hitherto only been open to the hounds after early shooting. Hornby is a beautiful place situated on a brow of undulating ground, looking across to the Kennels at a few miles' distance.

The town of Bedale in the centre, or Thirsk and Northallerton on the eastern boundary, are the choice of quarters for an intending visitor. The two latter are on the main line of the North-Eastern Railway; and are about five hours from London (*viâ* York, and King's Cross or St. Pancras). The horse the visitor should bring may perhaps be gathered from the foregoing. Short legs and strong back are desirable; and it is better that the animal should jump within himself than fling too far and freely.

Major Dent hunts three days a week—for which his country is more than ample. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are his days, distributed much as follows —Monday is usually for the centre of the country; and Bedale (3½ miles from The Kennels) has for years been the first advertised meet of the season), to draw the Bedale Woods (the property of Sir Henry Beresford Peirse). The Leases (the site of the Kennels—the chief claim of which, by the way, to be in keeping with the Hunt must rest solely upon

their antiquity) is also a frequent meet. So is Scruton Hall, where there are many nice plantations, and a good covert on the property. Newton House is a favourite fixture; and is the seat of Mr. W. D. Russell, a very staunch preserver, who has several small coverts, besides Gatenby Wood and its adjoining whin. Patrick Brompton is another place of meeting; and to the west they get to Leyburn and a higher and wilder country.

Wednesday is for the south—the farthest and chief meet being Kirby Hill or Kirby Windmill. From here hounds either draw westward by Marton-le-Moor and Devonshire Wood (all Mr. Clare Vyner's) or eastward by Milby Whin, and the small woods at Cundall and Leckby—in both cases being accompanied by a large field over the light vale. Meeting at Studley (Lord Ripon's) they take the other side of the Yore, and seek a fox by the banks of streams and the wooded glens which intersect a wild but very possible hunting country. There is covert for miles along the little river Laver; and at Spa Gill—whither Fountains Abbey draws as many sight-seers from Harrogate in the summer as a meet at Studley does in the winter. For a second fox—or a first as the case may be—they work on homewards over quite a goodly hill-country by Azerley; Baldersby also (Lady Down's) is frequently fixed for the lighter part of the vale, for the coverts there and for Hutton Moor; after which they may draw up to Norton Conyers (the ancient seat of the Graham family). Or, again, meeting at Norton Conyers they may draw the converse way, finishing at Baldersby.

Friday is for the north of the country—the pith of which is the stiff clay vale, through which run the Swale and the Wisk, with many minor streams and stells (large open drains)—all of which are too frequently full to overflowing, rendering the ground deep and holding. Of the meets here Scorton is in great favour—close to it being Uckerby Whin, from which many and good runs have of late been constantly scored. Near Kiplin Hall Capt. Carpenter has just founded a new whin of great promise. Pepper Hall is a favourite meet; and Langdon Hall (Mr. Elliott's) has plantations full of foxes, besides Thrintoft Whin. At Hunton Bonville (Mr. Hillyard's) are several small but good detached plantations and a whin, on the border adjoining the Hurworth. For the higher ground Catterick, Hipswell, and Scotton often figure among the advertisements; and there are good coverts on the hills opposite Richmond.

LORD ZETLAND'S.*

The country now hunted by the Earl of Zetland is the home portion of the immense area which, during the latter part of last century and the early part of the present, constituted the celebrated Raby Country of the Earl of Darlington (afterwards Duke of Cleveland). Raby Castle, the Ducal residence, stands in the heart of Lord Zetland's territory; and the old Raby pack not only took in the ground of the present Bedale in the south, but in the north worked much farther into Durham—where there were then, of course, none of the railways now slashing and cutting the face of the county into so many minute slices. Nor, on the other hand, did the iron horse exist to whisk hounds down to their far distant meets: and how the old Earl could cover such a vast extent of country, even with a most lavish expenditure, is a very marvel.

Lord Zetland's Kennels are at his beautiful seat, Aske Park, near Richmond, on the southern borders of his existing country—which embraces the extreme north-west of Yorkshire and the south-west corner of

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* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 5, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

Durham. The river Tees divides the two counties, almost bisects the Hunt, and here and there does no little mischief by its presence—with its wooded, rocky, and dangerous banks, among which hounds can often scarcely get about, much less force a fox away. Aske is on the edge of what are here known as the Yorkshire Hills, and overhang the vale running up the east of the country—much as farther north Raby Castle is between the Durham Hills and the Durham Vale.

A continuation of the Bedale, Lord Zetland's Country runs along the side and base of the moorland hills with which Westmoreland encroaches upon Yorkshire. The same grassy slopes, the same heathery summits, and the same well-watered plain, are common to both. More use is, perhaps, made of the wild good-scenting moorlands of the latter: but in the main the two countries are very similar. Lord Zetland's has none of the light sandy plough into which The Bedale drifts in the far south. His vale is nearly all the same as the best of the Bedale low country (mixed grass and plough—the latter predominating): and the fences also are much alike—easy hedge-and-ditch, occasionally, but not often, on low banks. The hedges grow wild and unkempt; but are seldom of formidable strength. Timber is but little used; gaps being generally made up, where such labour is considered necessary, with wattle and thorns. You will have a great deal of jumping; and every opportunity of making a horse clever, without trying him too high. The jumps are such as an ordinary hunter will make light of. The clay of the

vale is also more than "fair scenting ground," and hounds that can work will seldom fail to make their way over it. At the same time it can scarcely be termed a "flying country," either for horse or hound —though in a favourable season (with plenty of rain) hounds will often run hard. Staindrop across to Aycliffe is especially fine vale. As you rise from the vale on to the lower undulations of the hills, grass becomes more prevalent and by degrees altogether takes the place of tillage; the hedges grow higher and stronger; stone walls come in and ditches go out; till gradually walls alone mark the enclosures. The grass is rough and soft, and almost always holds a scent: while the heather and moor above hold a better still—and hunting may here go on into the spring as late as would be possible, and fair, anywhere. On the upper ground a rider should know his way about; for in the roughest and stiffest parts there may be rocks and other impediments to circumvent, and the stonewalls themselves are not always negotiable. On the whole, though, Lord Zetland's is a most pleasant riding, and good hunting, country—with plenty of foxes everywhere, and records of sport of recent years that will bear comparison with that of any Hunt. The hills are seldom steep enough to make riding difficult: and, indeed, are very popular ground. There is always a scent on them; and, as there are no strong woodlands in the country, most of the cub-hunting has to be done on the moors—where plantations and ling (heather) find ample shelter for the hardy race of foxes there to be found.

Nearly all the Durham side of the country is the

property of the Duke of Cleveland; and it is in the Durham vale that the largest fields are seen with hounds—though the number even here seldom exceeds fifty or sixty horsemen. As with the Bedale, the resident gentry who hunt are comparatively few—though the farmers are fond of the chase, and, even when unable to take part in it, are very liberal in walking puppies for the Hunt. The strongest meets (such as those at Heighington and Piercebridge) are made up by an influx of strangers, either by train from north and south, or from the two neighbouring Hunts, The South Durham and The Hurworth. The little town of Croft, on the border of the latter, is a very favourite and convenient resort. From it hounds can be reached by road six days in the week; and variety is offered by four packs, viz., The Hurworth, Lord Zetland's, The Bedale, and The South Durham —such choice and such easy distances being attainable nowhere else except at Melton Mowbray. Darlington (on the main line and about five hours from King's Cross or St. Pancras) is another good resting-place, on the junction-point of Lord Zetland's, The Hurworth, and The South Durham: while Richmond, on the boundary between Lord Zetland's and The Bedale, should be a charming station for the soldiers who are fortunate enough to be quartered at its imposing new Barracks.

Lord Zetland has owned hounds for six years; and has now an excellent pack. To Mr. Cradock belongs the credit of founding it—some fifteen years ago: and the materials came chiefly from the kennels of Lord Portsmouth, Lord Henry Bentinck, The Milton,

The Bramham Moor, and Mr. Parry. But par excellence the father of the present kennel is a hound named Wanderer (by Lord Poltimore's Woldsman out of Lord Portsmouth's Hasty) who was entered in 1870—having been brought from the west of England by Mr. Cradock at the time of Lord Poltimore's famous sale. The old hound is still in this year 1881 enjoying a luxurious, if decrepit, old age among the strawricks and outbuildings adjoining the kennels. Besides Wanderer and a worthy son of his, Warrior, at home, Lord Zetland has of late gone very largely to Belvoir and Milton—with the best results.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday are the hunting days; which are arranged about as follows—

Monday is generally round home, chiefly on the Yorkshire Hills, and taking in but little of the vale. The chances are, indeed, that you will be among grass and stonewalls all day. Among the principal Monday meets are Hartforth Hall (the residence of Mr. Cradock, the late master), to draw the good coverts on the estate and afterwards Gilling Wood (Mr. Wharton's). To follow these are Lord Zetland's nice plantations and small woods. Meeting at Aske itself, they probably get to the Easby coverts—also small woods, belonging to Mr. Jacques. Other good fixtures are Barningham (Mr. Milbank's) on the banks of the Greta; while Greta Bridge is for the Brignall Banks (Mr. Morritt's). Forcett also is frequently named.

Tuesday gets the cream of the Durham Vale. Very deep when wet, it is yet at its best for sport after plenty of rain. Unfortunately it depends mainly on

gorse for its coverts: and almost all the gorse coverts are at the present moment laid waste by the severe frosts of the last two winters. Piercebridge is a very leading meet—with Fanny Barks, and several little gorses, to draw. Heighington, too, is a very attractive feature — with Redworth Whin, Sim Pastures, Wilkinson's Whin, and the Greystones Whin, all good gorse coverts. Selaby is for the Selaby Woods; and Legs Across, on a little eminence above the level of the vale, has the gorse of Toytop, and the plantation and whin of Trundlemire. The coverts in this district are all quite small—the Houghton Plantations, which may be reached from nearly any Tuesday meet, being the largest. There are, by the way, but few water jumps—properly so called, either in the Tuesday country, or elsewhere in the Hunt, though broken and often wooded streams are frequent.

Thursday is usually for the Yorkshire Vale—Halnaby way, so to define it—perhaps the stiffest country to ride over in the Hunt. Among the meets is Manfield, for the whin of that name — a nice covert. Cliffe (where lives Col. Wilson) has the Cliffe Woods. Halnaby (Mr. Wilson Todd's) is for the Halnaby and Clavaux coverts (most useful little woods). Stanwick Park, the residence of the Duchess of Northumberland, has coverts round it; Sedbury (Mr. Gilpin Brown's), with its plantations and privet, is quite a nursery for foxes; and Middleton Lodge (Mr. Backhouse's) is another meet to be noted.

On a Saturday hounds are taken to the far end of the country—to the west of Barnard Castle and Raby

Park. The Black Banks, on the course of the Weir, and on the extreme edge of the country, are quite a feature in this district—forming a chain of tremendously strong covert. It is altogether a rough wild tract—with heather, bogs, rocks, and riverbeds. The Tees in its higher and earlier stages is peculiarly crude and rocky. There are few regular coverts of any size. Foxes lie in the heather, in the wood fringing the streams, or in the occasional straggling moor hedges. Marwood is the meet for the Tees Banks; and Kinninvie for such coverts as the little woods of Hollandside, Paddock, and Hough Gill. On Tuesdays and Saturdays, it should have been mentioned, the hounds have to be vanned—to the distant meets beyond the Tees.

THE CRAVEN.*

From the Hampshire Down of The Vine and Tedworth on the south—to the Lambourne and Isley Downs (and the Old Berkshire and Vale of White Horse Coumtries) on the north, maps out the latitude of The Craven. The South Berkshire and the Duke of Beaufort's bound east and west respectively—Newbury being on its eastern border, Marlborough close to its western—joined one to the other by the Old Bath Road. When we add that there are Downs again at the latter place, it might easily be supposed that the Craven Country is down, and nothing but down. It certainly owns to a good deal of it; but it has also a belt of "London clay" along its southern border, and a great deal of light plough cast over the whole centre of the country. The Bath Road cuts off the clay district at the foot of the Hampshire Hills, and has the Great Western Railway and the river Kennett running side by side with it the greater part of the way from Newbury to Marlborough. North of the Old Road the ground grows gradually lighter till the higher grass level is reached, and we rise from

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 15, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

flinty tillage to mossy sheepwalk. On the lower ground, and wherever the plough has been at work, it is a case of noses-down and steady hunting always. The clay carries the better scent, but seldom one at all approaching brilliancy. Nor are the downs to be galloped *every* day. When there is a scent upon them, hounds fly as they do on the Southdown hills, and burst up their fox in from twenty to five-and-thirty minutes. The gorses being small and handy, hounds can be slipped away on their fox's back—and he never gets a moment to catch his second wind. Taken as a whole, though, the Craven must be spoken of as a cold-scenting country; and its attributes generally are scarcely of a type to raise it above the level of "provincial." This character applies, of course, to the Craven as a country, not as a Hunt: for as a Hunt it has always been maintained on a high footing. Some few years ago the members of the Hunt subscribed to build excellent Kennels and stabling on the present site—which came into Sir Richard Sutton's hands with his present estate at Benham. Sir Richard is commencing his second season of Mastership—having taken the country in 1880, and brought thither the bulk of the establishment with which Lord Spencer had been hunting the Pytchley woodlands, to wit, huntsman, feeder, some twenty-five couple of hounds, with five horses and saddlery, &c. His Kennel, therefore, contains much the same blood as is to be found among the present Pytchley; while in the existing and lately created Craven pack that he found on his arrival, there was, with other material, much from the Quorn Kennel.

Altogether the pack last season numbered sixty couple; and, with a quantity of puppies beyond the average out at walk, there is little doubt that it will rise rather than descend in the scale. The men are mounted not only suitably for the country, but with a liberality and judgment that would meet requirements much higher than likely to be exacted here.

Speaking generally, little is demanded of a horse in the Craven country beyond that he should be able to gallop on the level, and scramble over a rotten bank. On the downs he will have nothing at all to jump (with the rare exception of a small stake and bound) but will often have to extend himself for a bursting gallop. In the middle country the fences are no more tended and kept intact than amid the half enclosed ploughs of The Vine, Tedworth or H. H. In the vale he will have to encounter small banks, which probably crumble away as he is climbing over—leading often to his suspension midway or to a harmless roll on the other side. An evil phase of fence-making has, however, come much into vogue of recent years in the Craven country—to wit, *wire*, in its worst form. It is not even set up broadly and ostentatiously with a line of posts, as in the Shires: but is twined through the tops of thorns—turning the almost contemptible little hedge into a cruel and dangerous trap. Of course wire has not yet become by any means general; but it is already too frequent to be pleasant—and a country that of itself is by no means a horseman's paradise, is thus endowed with a most untempting characteristic.

If we must allude to another drawback, it is one

affecting hounds—and consequently of dire importance to those whose task it is to find them and to keep them in health. We mean the flints, which lie so thickly over the whole country. If the palm is to be given anywhere for quantity, it is perhaps due to the Ramsbury district, where you could scarcely drive the tine of a fork into the ground without its ringing against a loose sharp flint. But they are most to be dreaded on the downs, where they are often half embedded in the turf, with firm keen edges above the ground to cut a hound's foot or leg like a knife.

There are not many big coverts in the Craven country as at present defined. Perhaps the largest are the woods of Chaddleworth and Welford (in the middle of the Hunt), with Aldbourn Chase, and, in the extreme south, Pen Wood. The latter is a great boggy place, wherein it is almost dangerous to leave one ride to make a short cut to another. On the downs you find only nice small gorses, where a fox can neither dwell when found, nor rest when tired.

The Downs, which run round all the north of the country, may be said to commence about Ilsley and Catmore, and continue by Woolley Park, Lambourne, Russley and Marlborough—the country shelving downwards thence past the Kennels (which are at Walcot, close to Kintbury Station) till it reaches its lowest at the foot of the hills on which stand Buttermere Combe, &c. Along this southern boundary-line there are various neutral coverts—for instance, Buttermere Gorse and Combe Wood—drawn conjointly with The Tedworth; and the woods of Dairyhouse, Nuthanger, and Fro Park with The Vine.

The best attended meets are generally those near Newbury, which bring in the South Berkshire men; while the Down meets attract many from The Old Berkshire; and the Rockley side, again, will often tempt some from The Duke of Beaufort's. But on no occasion are the Craven fields really large.

Savernake Forest is no longer hunted by The Craven, as the maps referred to would lead one to suppose; but its wooded and well rided depths provide sport for The Tedworth in autumn (when they go there for a continuous fortnight), winter, and spring. The Craven often find themselves in it—as they meet on two sides of it. Mildenhall, for instance, is only just outside; and a fox from the Borders is as likely to cross the Kennett and make his way into the Forest as to mount the hill and embark on a trial of speed across the Marlborough Downs.

The Kennels are admirably situated to command the country; and we may well take them as a central point in fixing the whereabouts of some of the chief meets.

Sir Richard Sutton hunts four days a week—Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, which, with occasional variation are generally distributed as under:

Monday is probably near at home, or to the south of the Kennels and of the Bath Road. Benham Park—the residence of the Master and three miles from Kennels—is often named. It has many coverts, and of course many foxes—among the former being Scots Wood, Wickham Heath, &c. Hamstead Park is another fixture; and Stype Wood (Rev. H. Mitchell's)

often leads into the Forest of Savernake. From Woodhay House they draw over common and through wild, rough, scattered covert—often amid bogs whose peaty surface bends and shakes under the footfall like Irish snipe-ground. Sometimes when the south of the country has been worked hard, Wickham Five Bells may be named as a Monday meet. From here they get Norbyns Wood, Winding Wood, and Heathanger, or else have Benham and its coverts.

Wednesday is always for the Sidmonton side—to avoid clashing with Newbury market, which is on a Thursday, when hounds accordingly go far away to the west. Sidmonton Brick-kiln is for the coverts neutral with the Vine, as above-mentioned; while working homewards, there are Adbury, Sandleford, &c., to be drawn. Blind Man's Gate is a fixture close to Pen Wood, which belongs to Lord Carnarvon. Three Legged Cross is for the same draw; the result of which, if a find, may lead over the hill into Vine or Tedworth territory. The meet named directly for the Sandleford district is usually Greenham.

Thursday being more often for the west of the country towards the outskirts of Savernake Forest—there is the meet of Ramsbury, with Blake's Wood and Aldbourn Chase (where covert follows covert), just on the verge of the Marlborough, or Ogbourne, Downs. When Aldbourn is advertised, the gorse is drawn, and the Chace comes after. Mildenhall is for the Mildenhall Borders (a number of timber and connected belts), with Rabley Wood to follow. Eastbury Park has a nice wood; and Preston Gate has the same in Marriage Hill. Nearer home are Welford

Woods (Mr. Eyre's), with Chaddleworth Woods (Mr. Wroughton's) adjoining.

Saturday is the day for the Downs—alternately on the Lambourn and the Ilsley side. In the former direction is Baydon, whence they often move off to Ashdown Park—which, again, is itself a meet, with two nice wood coverts. From Seven Barrows they get to Mr. Hippisley's small but wonderfully preserved coverts close to Lambourn Village, and thence to Letcombe Bowers. On the Downs, on the way to the latter, are several gorses, such as Eastbury Gorse, &c.; from which hounds can always start on good terms. Woolley Park, or Tinker's Corner, are for the small coverts at Woolley (where Mr. Wroughton has always many foxes). At Lockhinge Bottom is another staunch fox-preserver — Sir R. Lloyd Lindsay. Farnboro' is the fixture for Ilsley Down and the good gorse coverts thereabouts. From Peasemore (just below the down) they draw the very useful woods of Breedon Park (Mr. King's); and go on, perhaps, to the small but favourite coverts at Langley—Ooreburgh and Prior's Court. From Hermitage (the most southerly of the Saturday meets) they are likely to work on to Catmore Borders.

THE SURREY UNION.*

Surrey no longer presents the same facilities for the London Nimrod as in the days when Mr. Jorrocks looked upon Surrey as the peculiar province of cockneys. "Surburban villany" has grasped half the hunting ground of The Surrey Union and the Old Surrey: and the red rover has been driven to regions only attainable by the help of the steam covert-hack, by those who would breakfast in Town. Not only that—but, unless ready to bear his fair share of the burden of the day, the Londoner is not told where he can calculate on finding hounds. Rightly enough, it is considered that the hunting field was never intended as a mere outlet for irresponsible mischief; and, accordingly, it is expected that the shareholders in the fun should be limited to the shareholders in its maintenance and expense. And so, like various other packs in the immediate neighbourhood of London, the Surrey Union adopts a plan, which, ere long, will probably become universal—and declines to advertise its meets to the world at large. No doubt, though, a reasonable subscription will at all times insure due

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 22, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

notice by post, and enable the London sportsman to put himself in the train at Waterloo, Victoria, or London Bridge at an hour not more inconvenient than if he had ten miles to canter. That many to whom business is first, Pleasure an after consideration, do avail themselves of the chance, is shown by the number of horse-boxes and pink coats conveyed by the morning trains every Saturday during the hunting season. The Surrey Union (and other Hunts who have supporters in London) make their arrangements to chime in with—rather than to thwart—the Saturday exodus. Thus every meet of the Surrey Union on that day is in easy reach of Epsom, Leatherhead, or Weybridge—each of which, again, is within a forty minutes' journey from Waterloo. On the other two hunting-days (Tuesday and Thursday), the train may be utilised to Leatherhead, Dorking, Baynards, or Guildford—as the case may be.

The Surrey Union Country, as now hunted, falls considerably short of the area it is entitled to occupy. Stanford's Map, however, shows pretty accurately the extent to which operations are at present carried. From Guildford to Reigate is its breadth. The prettiest bit of the country is the strip through which the railway runs as it passes Ewell on its way to Epsom—and this is about the nearest point to London where the Surrey Union hounds are ever seen. Mr. Richard Combe hunts that corner of their country which formerly took them up to Aldershot Camp; and at one time they used to work some of the ground now occupied by Mr. Godman. Even now the Surrey Union is quite an extensive Country for three days a

week; and it is only by railing the hounds to covert that the woods and clay of the southern weald can be utilised.

A ridge of chalk and grassy down runs from Guildford to Dorking, and round the eastern edge of the country by Walton, Epsom and Banstead. Within this half circle, to the north, all is a rather cold-scenting plough—lighter where the ground is higher, but heavier in the valleys such as the neighbourhood of Cobham, Wisley, and Ripley. South of the Guildford and Dorking ridge you drop at once into a deep clay, amid strong woods and a better scent. There are some great coverts, too, in the north—notably, the Prince's Woods and St. George's Hill. The former belongs to the Crown: and is believed to have received its name when the Prince de Joinville and the Duc d'Aumale resided at Claremont, and had the sporting rights of the adjoining woods. At the present day there is said to be a special clause in the lease, making a condition of the holding that foxes are always to be forthcoming to meet the requirements of the Surrey Union Hunt. No such condition would be necessary with the present tenant; but it is a satisfactory instance of foxhunting being still held in high places as The Sport of Kings. Deep and wide are the Prince's Woods—and many a time has the London sportsman been condemned to spend the whole of his Saturday outing amid their holding rides and vast extent. St. George's Hill, again, is a rough stretch of heather and plantation, reaching from Cobham nearly to Weybridge. Deer abound in it—the story going that some years ago a German in

the neighbourhood bought himself half a dozen deer, extemporised a paddock of sheep hurdles, and next morning was surprised to find his herd had disappeared. Since then they have increased to such an extent that there must be at least a couple of hundred in this wild tract: and, as it is often impossible for whips to get at hounds amid its bogs and thickets, there is great difficulty in keeping the youngsters of the pack from riot.

A great deal of the Surrey Union Country is very much the same, to ride over, as the Crawley and Horsham (already described)—chiefly ploughed fields of limited size, divided by straggling fences often built on a bank. This especially applies to the northern half of the country; where a horse's chief merit is to be able to scramble cleverly and to take things quietly and untiringly. On the downs he will be going on the top of the ground; and may have to gallop. But considerably more is required of him in the stiff clay weald in the south of the country. Here the fences grow strong on the top of high banks —with a deep ditch on one side, or even both. There are few gates, in the ordinary acceptation of the term; but the farmers get from field to field by means of draw-rails, as in Sussex. Here the name for them is heave-gates; and, though they are of the stiffest timber, men accustomed to the country jump them readily, and often in preference to the bank-and-fence alongside. Again, there is often a good scent in this southern, or Cranleigh, country; so that, as the inclosures are quite small, and there is little time for dismounting to lower the heave-gates, a man who

would ride to hounds must be continually on the jump. A horse for this part of the country must be a strong, clever fencer: and be able to gallop through dirt and to jump out of it.

The hounds are kennelled at Fetcham, close to the residence of the present Master, Mr. J. B. Hankey—whose grandfather and two uncles held the post before him. Mr. Hankey took office five years ago—succeeding Mr. Scott—and he then brought the pack back to its former Kennel near Fetcham Park. The Pack, though an old-established one (the property of the Hunt) has necessarily been chiefly maintained by drafts—the difficulty that exists with the Crawley and Horsham, and various other packs south of London, of getting a sufficiency of puppies reared at walk, being felt here. Thus in recent years The Surrey Union has been dependent chiefly upon the Meynell, Mr. Tailby, Lord Fitzhardinge, and the Puckeridge. To the first-named, however, they are indebted for a hound named Falkland, by whose help they have been successful in putting forward some most creditable homebred stock.

Foxes are fairly plentiful everywhere—except where in isolated cases the shooting interests may have been established by a non-resident and allowed by him to run counter to those of foxhunting. It is in this way, rather than by the presence of inconvenient numbers in the field, that the Hunt feels the neighbourhood of the metropolis. As a rule the residents in the Country do all in their power to welcome foxhunting and to forward its interests.

Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday being the three

days of hunting, Tuesday is generally occupied near home, and among its meets is Fetcham Downs. From here they take Norbury Park, the residence of Mr. Grissell, who, though never taking part in the chase except on foot, gives up his coverts entirely to foxes, and always has a great supply. From Leatherhead Downs, they work by Epsom to the Banstead coverts. Boxhill is another meet—for the great wooded hill of that name. Being a dry chalk height, it is in such favour with foxes that they are ever ready to accumulate here in great numbers. To find five or six brace on it is by no means uncommon; and to devote a whole day to routing them out is often a necessity. Margery Grove is the name of a meet and good covert close to Reigate, with a nice country all round, and every probability of a trip into Old Surrey territory. Another Tuesday meet is Wisley Heath, where they have heath and plantation to draw. From Ripley Green they go to Clandon Common. Clandon Park has beautiful coverts; and used to be a favourite resort. Bramble Ride and Hatchland's Park are two good draws. East Clandon is the usual fixture for the Norcotts.

Thursday almost always takes the Cranleigh and Ewhurst, or southern clay, country. These two places, indeed, are about the only meets in this district—each having large chains of woodland in its proximity. The foxes are wild and strong; and, when forced from the coverts, often go wide across the border over the vale. Hounds, too, can generally drive them through the woods, and force them, even if they cling to the woods, to run the rides at best pace. Meeting at Ewhurst, the usual routine is to draw Sir Trevor

Lawrence's well preserved coverts, *e.g.* Somersbury, The Buildings, &c.; while from Cranleigh they have Upper and Lower Canville, the property of Mr. Sadler, who owns also Bowles Rough and Fishpond. Near these are Longhurst Hill and Coxland (Mr. Thurlow's) — all being large woods almost continuously connected. For these meets hounds are always put on the rail to Baynards Station. A Thursday fixture too is Abinger Cross Roads, for the Pasture Wood (Mr. Evelyn), with some pleasant country and a good sprinkling of grass near.

Saturday takes in the north of the country—though there are some meets that may fall either on that day or on a Tuesday. Hawkshot Flat is always fixed for Saturday, with a view to The Prince's Woods—above described. Outside The Prince's, in the direction of Hook and Ewell, is nice fair hunting ground to Banstead, when a fox will take that direction. Fair-Mile is another equally frequent Saturday meet; and, while probably meaning Claremont (close to Esher) for a start, is almost sure to lead eventually to The Prince's, or the other big woodlands of St. George's Hill.

PART V.

THE OLD SURREY.*

In the year 1750 Mr. Gobsall kept foxhounds at Bermondsey—on the site of the premises and wharf now in possession of the Messrs. Dudin. The remains of the Kennels and stables are still to be seen; and the pack is said to have had an uninterrupted existence ever since. No wonder that the Old Surrey was its title, long prior even to the appearance on the scene of the most immortal Jorrocks.

Gradually pushed out by the relentless encroachment of brick and mortar, the Old Surrey Hunt has been driven farther and farther from the bank of the Thames, till now it can bring the sound of hound-music no nearer London than the outskirts of Croydon and Bromley; and the citizen who would jaunt in scarlet to the Surrey hills can no longer mount his hunter in Broad-street, but must either take the same steam covert hack which the worshipful hero aforesaid reserved solely for the "cut-'em-down countries," or else make a suburban residence his base alike for

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 22, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

business and holiday. Thus, a certain number of Londoners are in the habit of taking train from London Bridge or Charing Cross—returning by the same means at night. But by far the greater proportion of the present Old-Surrey-City-men have brought their Lares and Penates to some middle point—such as Croydon, Bromley, Beckenham, Norwood, &c.—whence they can easily get up to daily business, or take the saddle and trot to covert from their own door. Saturday has for years been given by the Old Surrey to the hills sweeping southward from Croydon; and he must be a very overworked man indeed, who cannot at least snatch a Saturday at only twenty minutes' distance from the City.

The hounds are quartered at Garston Hall, a mile or so from Kenley station, on the line branching to Caterham, from the main Croydon and Reigate Railway. Train to Caterham will, in fact, land the visitor within easy riding distance of every meet in the Hunt, whether "on the hills" or in the southern "vale." Garston Hall is a queer old mansion, that for generations has belonged to the family of the present master, Mr. E. Byron of Coulsdon Court, Caterham, and the pack is the property of the country—having been, together with the hunt horses of the time, presented by Sir Edward Antrobus on the occasion of his resigning the mastership in 1843. Much of the old blood still remains in the Kennel; though, owing to the difficulty which—in common with several other southern packs—exists of entering sufficient hounds of home breeding, it has been found necessary to obtain almost yearly drafts from other sources.

The Old Surrey country is divided between hill and vale—the former being about double the extent of the latter. "The hills," then, occupy all the north and centre of the country; and, whether claiming to belong to the county of Kent or of Surrey, are much of the same pattern throughout—steep, sweeping slopes of flinty plough, with woods, and chains of woods, freely interspersed over the whole. The country, of course, has its drawbacks—otherwise, so close and handy as it is to London, there would be no need for men to journey down to Leighton or Weedon. Hounds can frequently run hard over the Old Surrey hills, and the foxes will travel a long distance. But the coverts come too close together, the ascents to be breasted can often only be swarmed at foots pace, the flints cut horses' pasterns and fetlocks almost as freely as they do the feet of hounds; and, finally, the fascination of riding over fences has little or no opportunity here. The last-named would anywhere constitute a serious drawback in the eyes of the majority of hunting men. It is especially a shortcoming in the view of men whose days with hounds are only occasional—who have to do additional work at other times that they may snatch their outing, and who naturally look for all they can get on the holidays they manufacture.

The woods of the Old Surrey hills are tangled depths, of the same hazel, ash, and other growth as belong to the woodlands of Kent—cut down about every tenth year to form hop-holes and wattle. The rides are deep, vague, and casual; but a huntsman must go boring on through them, while the field generally work their way round to rejoin the pack as it regains the open

beyond. After the leaf is once dead, there is usually quite as good a scent inside the woods as in the open. Long runs are very frequent: and foxes get to run certain lines, which a regular attendant and observer may soon learn with some degree of certainty. Tom Hills, the famous huntsman (whose son now carries the horn) knew the run of the foxes so thoroughly that he was constantly in the habit of making up for deficiencies of scent by long forward casts, with, apparently, only instinct to guide him. On the open ground assistance is often forthcoming in the shape of a holloa; and, indeed, were it not for the frequent coverts to obscure the view, a travelling fox might, in the absence of hedgerows, be seen for miles. It should be noted, by the way, that, owing to agricultural depression, a good deal of land between the kennels and Cudham has completely lapsed from cultivation, rendering this district—naturally secluded and unpopulous, in spite of its vicinity to London—especially wild. Scent varies very much "on the hills." More often it has to be picked out than galloped to: but a better scent is forthcoming on many occasions than the appearance of the ground would warrant—and this is notably the case under the dry east winds of March.

The Vale, again, or "below the hill," is, as may be supposed, quite a different class of ground. Running along the southern border of the country from Gatton and Reigate to Chevening and Brasted, it merges into Burstow territory about Crowhurst and Edenbridge—the railway from Reigate to Tunbridge being the boundary line between the two countries. Reigate is

indeed a very favourite resort with men who set a proper appreciation on the Surrey Vale. Keeping their horses stabled here, or at Nutfield close by, they can run down—not only to the best of the Old Surrey, but to the pick of the Burstow, or to share a gallop with Mr. Nickalls and the Surrey Staghounds. The latter (whose Master is a fine sportsman) are kennelled at Nutfield; and a stag, with his head set for the vale, must show excellent sport before he regains his cart. The Vale consists chiefly of small inclosures—many of which are grass; the soil is deep, and the fences strong. The latter are by no means of any one particular type. The greater number, perhaps, are built upon banks, and are ditched on either side. Some are of hazel, and many are built up with strong wattle. Some have to be crept; while others, again, have to be flown. It will be gathered, then, that a horse must know his work to be a safe conveyance. He need not be exactly of Leicestershire class, but he must be a "knowledgeable hunter" with a leg at all times to spare. He must be sturdy and strong, both for the Vale and on the hills: and he will seldom be called upon to race—though if his lungs are not perfect, it is certain that he will soon be crying enough, either in the deep ground below, or up the steep hillsides above. For the Vale is apt to get very deep in mid-winter; and then carries a better scent than ever. The fields with the Old Surrey are seldom large, except on Saturdays, when, if the meet is near Croydon, a field of a hundred or a hundred and fifty is occasionally seen. As may be seen from the above, this is not altogether a favourite scene for

excursionists; and, consequently, the gathering at the covertside is in a great measure local. The farmers are very keen in their adhesion to an institution which dates back to their grandfathers; and a great number of them join the chase, while all of them do their best in its interest.

Monday, Thursday, and Saturday are the hunting days—Thursday being for the Vale, the other two days for the hills. Monday takes in "the Kent hills," *i.e.*, the north-east of the country. Among the leading Monday meets are Addington for Spring Park and the coverts of Sir J. Lennard, who is one of the principal members of the Hunt; Down, from which they draw Sir John Lubbock's coverts at, and near, his place at High Elms, such as Cuckoo Wood and the stronghold of Sow Wood. On the edge of the hills are Chevening and Knockholt, for Lord Stanhope's coverts; while the meet of Tatsfield points to Mr. G. Christy's woods, which form a chain with those of Sir John Lubbock.

Among the Saturday meets on the hill—in Surrey proper—are Merstham and Alderstead Heath, for coverts of Lord Hylton, who, though he does not himself hunt, preserves foxes heartily for the amusement of others. Banstead has the wood of Banstead Park, and a chance of running over the Surrey Union downs. Bradmore Green or Coulsdon Common are fixed for the Master's coverts; and Coulsdon Court is the opening meet of the season. Botley Hill takes them to the woods of Mr. Leveson Gower, the largest landowner and covertowner in the Hunt. Titsey Plantation, for instance, on the edge of the low country

is a sure find (Titsey and Limpsfield being meets for his strong vale coverts). From Farley Green are drawn the large woodlands round, such as the Selsdon and Sanderstead Woods.

Thursday is the day for "below the hill," where, again, there are many strong woodlands, though the western vale towards Bletchingley and Nutfield is open enough. Three foxes out of four found in the Vale, may make at once for the hills; though now and again one will set his head in the direction of East Grinstead and point southward for Burstow Park or Felbridge Park. The east of the Vale is much taken up by "charts"—great wild forest wastes of beech and oak, about which hounds may run for hours while the rider wanders through as he can find a track, or a semblance of one. Brasted Chart and Limpsfield Chart are very big; and there is a great deal of covert round Crockham Hill, of which a detached rise of woods (mostly on the east side) belongs to Mr. Williams.

Limpsfield, as before mentioned, is all the property of Mr. Leveson Gower of Titsey Park. Westerham (Col. Warde of Squerries) is the meet for Westerham Wood and Tower Wood; and from Tandridge and Oxted they go to Lord Cottenham's coverts and the Barrow Green Woods (the property of Mr. Master). In the best of the vale are the meets of Nutfield, Bletchingley, and Godstone, with smaller coverts in their neighbourhood. The Nutfield district is more sandy, as compared with the holding soil of the vale. It is rapidly getting built over—though Mr. Fielden, who has a small park there, seldom fails still to have a fox.

MR. RICHARD COMBE'S.*

Between Mr. Garth's and the Surrey Union, the H. H., the Hambledon, and Lord Leconfield's, runs a strip of rough country—the like of which is only to be found on Dartmoor or Exmoor. Each of these Hunts was ready to hand over to Mr. Combe's liberality, or to share with him, some few miles of ground within reach of his house. He accepted the gift, and the task, with determination to make the best of it, and his resolve has been steadily and successfully carried out during the half dozen years past. On the wild heathered tracts, and amid the rough fir woods, between Chobham and Guildford, between Farnham and Petersfield, foxhounds were but occasionally seen. Now a good pack is regularly at work here five days a fortnight; and for those who love hunting for hunting's sake there is ample opportunity of study and amusement. The Aldershot soldier is especially the one who should be grateful. And in the main he certainly is—though, truth to tell, he is more likely to be exigeant, especially in his first youth and keenness, than almost any other class of man. For, with all due

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 21 and 22, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

respect to the profession, quite a majority of its members, if they do not "hunt to ride," at least look upon the riding as a leading corporate virtue in the composition of foxhunting, and believe that in it is contained the charm, the steel, the very life of the pursuit. Who shall blame them? Certainly not I. What is the moral that I find deduced from the researches necessary to this long series of sketches? What is the measure by which the merits of a Hunting Country are gauged—not by an individual scribbler, not by local residents, but by the general public? As in racing, so with hunting, the public are the best judges. And the public show plainly how they fix a comparative scale of merit for the Countries of England. That is the *most popular*—and therefore that is the *best*—country, which gives the pleasantest ground to ride over and the hottest scent to ride to. Happily, the two conditions are, more often than not, found conveniently linked together. Blood (if worth anything from its birth) will have its fling—and be young as long as it may. When age has diluted its current and weakened the power of its throb—then is it time to draw rein, and to seek company and pastime more in keeping with staid experience and demure reflection. So argues, not wholly without reason, the spark of chivalry whom destiny has brought to Aldershot. Content to swallow in the summer as many pecks of Long Valley dust as may be deemed needful for his country's good (provided always, and of course, that his season ticket will allow of his washing it down each evening with the pink wine of Piccadilly or Pall Mall), he is yet only

allowed by an inconsistent Government thoroughly to devote some two months and a half to the most important part of his military education—to wit, cross-country riding. Mr. Combe, Mr. Garth, and Mr. Deacon (H.H.) in some degree, it is true, assist him, without thwarting the authorities, by bringing excellent packs of hounds within reach of camp. But he has seen for himself, or at at any rate been told, that the green board on which Kriegspiel can best be played, lies far afield from Aldershot; and it is to his exceat he looks for indulgence in it in the more perfect and instructive form. His vacation studies are, in fact, what tend most to fit him for his degree—as soldier and fox-hunter. Still, for steady and zealous practice, hearty exercise, and a measure of sport, he will find material plentifully to hand in the immediate neighbourhood of the Camp—and prominently at the hands of Mr. Richard Combe. Again, *la jeunesse* is by no means necessarily all *dorée*—least of all, as a matter of fact, in military life. Ungilded, it may yet be sporting; and in such case will make the most of what it can find on the spot, foregoing the extravagance attendant on ambition and travel. In plain words, it is not in the power of every man who bears Her Majesty's commission to keep a stud of hunters at a distance from his regiment; and there are a great number of officers at Aldershot who, having one horse, or two, are thankful enough to ride out of camp twice a week, to see a pack of foxhounds working well in a rough country. Had the Horse Guards (no, it's all War Office now) sent them to Weedon or Northampton, they would have sallied out with increased

fervour, possibly, for the same number of days; but a paternal Government, as before observed, pays little heed to fostering the tastes of its warriors in this direction; and for one chance it gives them of a quarter in a high-class country, it insists ten times on placing them in an indifferent one.

To ride with hounds across Mr. Combe's territory requires some little nerve; and is excellent practice for either man or horse. Both must use their eyes; the rider must learn to use his hands, and the horse his legs. Miles and miles—in fact, the bulk of the country is clad, and hidden, in heather. Here and there a little strip of vale is found, where cultivation has a chance, where the soil is deep, and fences are strongly built. But most of the country is of one pattern, light sandy soil, on which heather and fir alone can flourish. The Government are the leading proprietors, and it is especially suited for the requirements of camp and exercise. Thus, for a quarter of a century sappers and miners, gunners and linesmen, have been practising every variety of earthwork and trench digging—more particularly over the north of the country and the neighbourhood of Aldershot. The pits and trenches made by the troops have seldom been filled in, when the lesson of the day is completed; and they now remain, overgrown with heather, a constant succession of pitfalls for the rushing aide-de-camp or the artless foxhunter. Here and there, too, high banks divide the moorland; and the ditches on either side are often completely hidden by the luxuriant heather—making it difficult for a horse new to such ground to measure his stride, or change it, with

sufficient readiness to avoid a fall. Ruts made by timber carts or the passage of heavy guns, are, again, very frequent and often deep; and, altogether, horses have every opportunity given them of blundering on to their heads, or of learning to know better. It is a maxim of the country that if a horse can keep his legs intact for one season, he will probably go on unharmed for many a year. A small horse and a compact one is the best mount, and least liable to accident. Hounds will sometimes run very fast; for on a favourable day scent not only hangs to the footfall or floats in the air, but clings to the heather which Reynard has perhaps brushed as he passed. Thus it is often possible to drag up to a fox for a mile or two before he is unkennelled; and it not unfrequently happens that a fox will lie close till the pack is all round him, when he runs a great chance of being chopped by jumping up in the midst. Once afoot he can keep going for a long time before hounds—for he belongs to a sturdy breed that is accustomed to travel wide for its food. When pressed, he will keep as much as possible to the tracks or paths, where any such exist among the heather. With such a mass of covert, whether wood or heather, spread over the country, it will be easily understood that difficulty must often exist in hitting upon the foxes—even in districts where they are known to be plentiful. In the early part of the season a litter is generally to be found settled together somewhere in the neighbourhood of its birthplace. But once dispersed, it may remain widely scattered; and hours may sometimes be spent in drawing over ground where plenty of foxes have been only recently seen.

Perhaps the most sporting and best scenting part of the whole of Mr. Combe's country is the Woolmer and Brimstone district in the far south—chiefly rough and hilly forest ground, over which the H.H. and Lord Leconfield still maintain a right. Two strong bits of vale run outwards from the Woolmer Forest, viz., the Hartley Vale (from Brimstone to Hartley Wood in the H.H. country), and the Liss Vale (from the Forest southwards towards Petersfield). These two, with the little Wanborough Vale, running under the Hog's Back from Ash to Guildford, form almost the whole of the lowland of the Hunt.

The Kennels are on Mr. Combe's property at Pierrepont, some three miles from Farnham—the town being three miles from Aldershot, and less than an hour and a half's journey by L. and S.W.R. from Waterloo Station. North and South of Pierrepont the country runs for about a dozen miles, as the crow flies—though its width is nowhere more than five or six. Immediately round Pierrepont itself, woods and heath stretch for miles, in some directions uninterruptedly. The hounds are of excellent blood—being in the first instance composed of drafts from many leading kennels, such as the Grove, Lord Portsmouth, the Milton, Quorn, &c. During the last two seasons Mr. Combe has been able to put forward an entry of home breeding nearly equal to his requirements.

The days of hunting are Tuesday and Friday in the one week, Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday in the next—the usual rule being, Monday or Tuesday near home, Wednesday in the upper country by or about

Aldershot, and Friday or Saturday in the south—*i.e.*, the Liss district or Woolmer Forest.

The meets in the north of the country are Frimley White Hart or Frimley Green, whence they draw the Government heaths, such as Chobham Ridges, and where a fox, if found, is sure to be a good one; and Pirbright, for the same ground drawn in the contrary direction. Ash Station or Tongham Station are fixed for the Wanborough coverts and Seal Gorse or the heath and fir coverts of Hampton Lodge—the latter belonging to Mr. Howard. Worplesdon, again, is another occasional meet north of the Hog's Back.

The home meets of Wrecklesham, The Kennels, or Pierrepont, are for Mr. Combe's estate—his shooting extending here for at least five miles, of heather and fir trees, across the country to The Devil's Jumps, the hills on the east. Batts Corner and the Holt are fixtures for the woodland chain behind the Kennels. This is again Government ground; and the coverts hold capital foxes. Thursley Village is the usual meet for The Jumps; while from Churt they draw the Churt coverts before getting on to The Jumps.

In the south, which as above-mentioned forms the Friday or Saturday ground, Hawkley Hangers and Steep Hangers mark the hilliest part of all. The meet of Brimstone Bottom points to the heart of Woolmer Forest (also Government property) and may lead over the Hartley Vale; from Liphook they come on to Weaver's Down, &c.; Liss is on recognised neutral ground (with the Hambledon) for Bushey Copse and Hawkley Hangers; and Hawkley is for

Greatham Hill and Old Warren. Grayshot and Headley bring us back again in the direction of the Kennels; from the former they draw Mr. Philips's heath and woods; while from the latter they get to Lidshot, &c.

THE BURSTOW.*

An unpretending but very sporting little country is the Burstow—close at hand for the Londoner, yet as free from artificialism and Cockney attributes as if in Yorkshire, instead of within twenty miles of the metropolis. Not a grass country, over which hounds can always race and horses must fly, it is yet the scene of capital runs and good hound work. It has a rough tract of forest in which to teach and practise a pack; the rest is flat and pretty vale—a Saturday holiday ground, on which many a London business man finds sport as ready to hand, and quite as bright and thorough, as he can reach elsewhere. Of the two days a week, Wednesday is advertised, that who will may join in forest hunting; while Saturday is kept snug for subscribers, and for those who hold a local interest in the vale. For, with Reigate, Horley, and Godstone, three stations on the edge of the vale, it is easy to understand how readily the little country might be inundated with excursionist foxhunters, from city and suburbs, if an open invitation were given for a day when everyone is at liberty.

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* See Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 22; and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

The Burstow pack existed as harriers for nearly a century (latterly under the mastership of Mr. H. Kelsey, of Burstow Park), before Mr. Birkbeck assisted in giving them a nobler vocation, rather more than twenty years ago. Started as a farmers' pack, it has during its career never been hunted by a professional. In the chase of the hare it showed wonderful sport, in days when the vale scarcely owned a drain, and when its followers ran on foot, carrying long poles to help them over the broad ditches and wide unkempt fences. By degrees the country came under better cultivation, and an occasional burst after a fox whetted the appetites of those who now found it no longer possible to keep with the hounds except on horseback. So it dawned on Mr. Birkbeck and his friends to fly regularly for the higher game; the Old Surrey Hunt courteously met the suggestion, conceding a sufficient area for the purpose; and the Burstow became henceforth a pack of foxhounds. Mr. Hooker continued to hunt the hounds for Mr. Kelsey till the season '66-67; when Mr. H. Gerard Hoare took his place, and on the death of Mr. Kelsey, about two years ago, also assumed the duties of mastership. Excellent sport having throughout accompanied his efforts.

The pack takes its stand chiefly on its old blood, aided in recent years by strains from the Badminton and Vale of White Horse Kennels. The hounds are all made of a pattern to go, and their tenacity in clinging to a cold scent, in covert and out, is a special attribute. The coverts (beech, oak scrub, and hazel woods, of true Kent and Sussex type) are frequent

and of some size—even in the vale country—while the Forest was once a continuous mass of rough covert, large areas of which still exist. Hounds, therefore, must be full of tongue, and must perforce, work for themselves—a maxim that is held equally to apply when their fox leads over the open, the stiff clay of which may, or may not, hold a scent, as weather and other conditions direct. When wet and warm, however, the vale is often good scenting ground, and is then as pleasing an arena as any in the south of England. The inclosures are small; a good deal of grass is scattered here and there; banks and ditches add to the pastime a zest, of which the riding men of Surrey are well appreciative. A certain number of county sportsmen live on the spot; but by far the larger proportion of the field are business men, who, living in London or its suburbs, either keep a horse or two on the scene or bring one with them by rail for the day of hunting. The vale not only offers them better sport and holiday; but is much easier of access than the Ashdown Forest; and therefore it has become a matter of custom for the Master to fix Saturday as the subscribers' day, between Reigate and East Grinstead or Hartfield—keeping The Forest and the far south of the country for Wednesday's work. The Kennels are at Smallfield Common near Burstow (the nearest station being Horley, little more than an hour's journey from Victoria Station)—and many a long journey home have hounds to make after a forest run.

The outline of the Burstow country has been subjected to many variations in past years. The Surrey

Union at one time lent a slice of ground in the north-west as far as the vicinity of Leith Hill; and, again, the Burstow hounds used to draw the Penshurst neighbourhood and up to Tunbridge Wells (which has of late reverted to the West Kent). Now they make up their country by the help of the Crawley and Horsham, which Hunt has given them territory from East Grinstead down to the borders of the Southdown —and this portion forms their Wednesday ground.

The vale of course gets deep and holding in mid-winter, though it is by no means so sticky after recent rain, however heavy, as on the breaking up of a frost. In the former case, choosing the furrows, you may splash along the surface with tolerable ease: in the latter, your horse's feet are held as in wax, and he must be a stout one to make any progress at all. The vale coverts are not so large but that plenty of travelling room is left outside; though, as they are often deep to ride through, they are extensive enough to exhaust a horse before he reaches the open. Woods of twenty to thirty acres are more common than larger coverts. That of Cutandly is perhaps the biggest, as it is also one of the best, in the vale. As with the Crawley and Horsham, and other southern packs, shooting considerations not unfrequently affect the interests of foxhunting—and this is particularly the case with many nice coverts by the side of the main line, from London to Brighton, the shooting of which has been let to strangers. But on the whole the Burstow country is fairly stocked—as is proved by the fact that during the late very open season (1881-82) hardly a blank day occurred. And the foxes are of a

strong breed, that will often stand up before hounds for two hours or more, even on a good scenting day. The country being so limited in extent, the coverts have occasionally to bear considerable pressure; and foxes will then take refuge in any small spinnies, or sometimes even in a strong hedgerow. They will, however, seldom if ever lie actually in the open; as after October there is not even the shelter of a stubble to protect them.

The fences of the Burstow vale are almost entirely bank-and-ditch—not difficult for a hunter taught in the country, but just such as must bring to grief a horse whose education has been limited to jumping everything he meets at a fly. Hazel, or sometimes thorn, is grown on the banks; but the hedge itself is less of an obstacle than a blind, being as a rule merely loose growers, trimmed or straggling. But the ditch may be broad; the bank the same, and high; and a hunter has to jump the one, alighting on the other. A shortlegged horse, with a muscular back and his full allowance of ribs, is the style of mount for the Burstow vale, and he will do well enough also for the Forest. It is an excellent country to make a tyro into a horseman; but it is not an easy one over which to teach a young horse and see the sport at the same time. It should be mentioned that the vale in question is exceptionally level throughout, a fact that in itself leads to the deep ground proving less severe upon horses than if it were more undulating.

In spite of not advertising the vale fixtures, the Saturday field is often quite as large as convenient, to itself and for sport—though, as all things go by

comparison, the number of *seventy* or *eighty* will scarcely represent the idea of a crowd to a man who may happen to have to take his lot elsewhere among hundreds. And as with hundreds, so with seventies, it seldom happens that each one of these is a subcriber.

"The Forest," though as above-mentioned no longer an unbroken tract of woodland, is only partly under cultivation — considerable portions of it still remaining in wood and heath. Here and there a patch of bog or swamp is still to be found; and in neighbourhoods where such are known to exist it behoves a rider to fight shy of rush or mossy grass. But there are gentlemen's seats and pretty parks in, and around, the Forest—and in all as much, perhaps, of open ground as of timbered covert. If not popular with the outside public (and seldom do a score attend hounds here) this district is very valuable to the Hunt, being capital schooling ground for hounds, and where few of the restrictions in vogue on so many shooting preserves are allowed to hold. The hounds can thus go in the Forest almost where and when the Master chooses. Lord Sheffield, though he does not himself hunt, is one of the country's main supporters; and "Sheffield Forest" is some of the most favourite ground on this side. And the same cordial help is given to the Hunt by Sir Spencer Wilson, the adjoining proprietor (who, as well as his sons, takes an active share in the sport), by Mr. Hardy of Danehurst, and by Lord Delawarr at Buckhurst. Another who renders the greatest service to the Hunt on the Forest side is Mr. Cutler of Fletching, a farmer and good old

sportsman, who is always working in the interests of fox hunting. Fletching is, perhaps, the farthest meet of the Forest; but it is difficult to say exactly where the southern boundary line is drawn.

It will be understood that to map out all the meets of a Hunt that purposely refrains from advertising, would be superfluous if not out of place. It may, however, be allowable to note a few of the principal fixtures on either side of the country. Thus in the vale, and near Redhill Junction, is Salford's Gate, with various nice little coverts at hand and the probability of getting to Burstow Park. Petridge Wood (Mr. Maple's) is also near; and a safe, unfailing find is Ham Roughet (of which, if I mistake not, Mr. Morrison, the esteemed secretary of the Hunt, has the shooting). The same may be said of South Hale, which is cared for by Mr. James Elliott, one of the oldest and staunchest supporters. South Hale is a covert composed of some three or four patches of furze running one into the other. "The Bell," Outwood, is a very sporting meet with a good covert. Dorman's Land is another place of meeting, and the Lagham coverts on the farm of Mr. Mills are exceedingly well cared for—as are those of Mr. Hooker, jun., at Crowhurst. From Dorman's Land, too, they reach the coverts of St. Pierre, where another tenant farmer and sportsman of old standing—Mr. Hamlin—secures the well-being of the Hunt. From "The Duke's Head," Copthorn, they draw Felbridge and Cuttandly, a great stronghold in the hands of Mr. Gatty. Finally—before leaving the subject of the vale—it must not be left unwritten that the Kennels, their arrangements and

surroundings, are still looked after by Mr. Hooker (now in his eightieth year), who for so many seasons made the woodlands ring, and who still drives out in his carriage to holloa a fox over a road with a voice that age has robbed of none of its power and richness.

In the Forest, or, rather, on the borders of it, are the meets of Holtye or Markbeach, near which are some good coverts of Mr. Clay's, of Ford Manor, of Mr. Smith's of Hammerwood, and Mr. Talbot of Falconhurst. Withyham is advertised for Lord Delawarr's preserves, and further on into the Forest proper is Forest Row, for Mr. Larnach's coverts, Hindleap Warren, (Mr. Freshfield's), Broadstone Warren, and Pippingford (Mr. Grey's). Then there is the "Sheffield Arms" for Lord Sheffield's estate and that of Sir Spencer Wilson; and Skeynes Hill for Mr. Grantham's and Mr. Hardy's coverts. Horstead Keynes and Hoathly are other Wednesday meets—and with these our sketch may come to a conclusion.

THE HURWORTH.*

Originally a part of the famous Raby country, the Hurworth first started into independence about half a century ago. The old Earl of Darlington (as distinct from the subsequent Duke of Cleveland) used to range, with one pack and a limited establishment of horses, over a territory that included part of the present North Durham, all the South Durham, Lord Zetland's, the Bedale, the Hurworth, and (missing the Bramham Moor) most of the Badsworth countries. To this day the Hurworth, Lord Zetland's, and the Bedale, continue to wear the black collar of the Raby. The history of the Hurworth, in a few lines, is as follows. The brothers Wilkinson, of Neasham Abbey, first started the separate pack—the one acting as huntsman, the other as whip. The next name of note in its annals is that of Mr. Frank Coates, whose fame as an amateur huntsman was wide and pronounced. Some time afterwards Mr. Tom Parrington—whose talent and judgment on the flags are still fully recognised—carried the horn for two seasons. Mr. J. Cookson of Neasham (the breeder of many famous racehorses—Mincemeat,

* See Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 5, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

Kettledrum, Dundee, Regal, St. Louis, among others) was then master till 1873, when Lord Castlereagh took them for two years. Major Godman had them for four seasons; since which Mr. Cookson has again held the mastership.

The position of the Hurworth country is half in Durham, half in the North Riding of Yorkshire, and it runs north and south, with the Bedale and Lord Zetland's on its western border, the Cleveland and Sinnington on its eastern. With the two former Hunts it shares the stiff clay vale running between the Westmoreland Hills on the one side and the high moorlands of North Yorkshire on the other. The course of the railway from Northallerton northwards, to either Preston junction or Darlington, offers a fair insight into the description of ground to which the Hurworth confine their operations. The frowning crags of the Hambleton Hills are included in the south of their country; but they are held to be as unhuntable as they are unrideable, and so, in point of fact, the Hurworth hounds are confined strictly to the well-watered vale below. Rivers and brooks wind about the lowland almost as freely where it belongs to the Hurworth as where it is hunted by the Bedale or Lord Zetland's. The Tees flows past the Kennels and across the north of the country, dividing Durham from Yorkshire—a wide river with few bridges and fewer fords. The Leven and its wooded banks—which the stranger in his ignorance might credit with being the home of numberless foxes—winds down half its length; the Wisk cuts across its centre, and down its western border; while the Cod and other minor

streams find their way to its southern limits. The Tees is such a size that foxes will seldom face it: but the Leven does not possess such terrors for them, and consequently proves the more frequent evil of the two. Its forty feet of water may not check a flying fox, but forms a complete stopper to the most resolute pursuer who may have to gallop round a mile or two to regain the pack if he can find it. The same opportunity is often enough presented by the Wisk; and consequently it is by no means an uncommon occurrence for hounds to be lost to their field for a period indefinite and anxious.

The strong clay of the Hurworth Country carries a steady scent. The greater proportion of the ground is under the plough; but grass is freely scattered about, and is especially prevalent in the south—or Northallerton—district. This latter, indeed, were only foxes always forthcoming, might lay claim to being the choicest corner in Yorkshire. Corner is the appropriate term, as it is hemmed in by the Hambleton Hills on the one side, and railways, road, and River Wisk on the other. The last-named is a source of discomfort common to both Hurworth and Bedale—as it is unjumpable, unfordable, and sparsely bridged, yet seems to present no obstacle to foxes. But from, say, Hutton's Plantations, in the other direction—to the hills—means as pretty a scurry as is to be had in the county. It is a fact that establishes beyond doubt the scenting properties of much of the North of England soil, that hounds can almost always carry a line on the plough, and never fail to run on the grass. Such a thing as a pack throwing up in the middle of a

grass field—everyday occurrence as it is in the Shires—is almost unknown in the Hurworth Country, and very rare anywhere in Northumberland, Durham, or North Yorkshire. On the contrary, the sight of a patch of green turf in front is always cheering to the eyes of a huntsman, whose hounds have been puzzling their way under difficulties. "Now we shall get on" is a certainty; the pack freshens up, the music rises, and life is at once lent to the proceedings. The Hambleton Hills have none of the green slopes, which adorn the edge of the moorlands rising upwards from Lord Zetland's country and the Bedale; but they start up at once with steep rocky face, all beyond being rough, unenclosed heather and moor. With a full supply of foxes, the flat vale of the Hurworth would be most sporting ground: for it is a good country for hounds and above the average for horsemen. But it is badly off for coverts; and from various causes it is in some parts difficult to get foxes preserved as they should be. There are very many small freeholders; and it has not always been found possible to ensure a community of opinion on a subject that more than any other calls for the agreement of good fellowship. As one instance in proof. All the whin coverts of the north have suffered heavily under the severe winters of recent years. But, where coverts fail, Lord Zetland, just over the border, can draw the fallows and make sure of a find in any half-hour of the day. It is not so with the Hurworth. They have some few good coverts on their Durham ground; and there are little places anxiously watched and cared for in all parts of the country. But within

reach of the hills, foxes soon leave the slender coverts of the vale for the safety of the moorlands; while the north-west and its fine riverside coverts do little to provide the means of sport—and, as a consequence, the prolonged area of the Hurworth country is no more than equal to its two days a week.

The little town of Croft, on the North-Eastern Railway, between Northallerton and Darlington, stands out as the Melton Mowbray of the north. A choice of four packs, and every temptation to ride to covert five days out of the week, may well entitle it to the name. The Hurworth Kennels are close to its gates; and the best of the South Durham, of Lord Zetland's, and of the Bedale is close at hand. Witness the programme—Monday, Lord Zetland, in the neighbourhood of his own place and kennels. Tuesday, a choice between the Hurworth near at home, in their north country, and Lord Zetland on his Piercebridge side. Wednesday becomes the only difficulty; and every second week this is met by the South Durham being about the Bradbury and Windlestone district. On a Thursday Lord Zetland meets, generally within five miles, in the direction of Cliff, &c. Friday finds not only the South Durham in their nearest and best country, but the Bedale in their Scorton Vale—the pick of their ground; while on a Saturday the Hurworth go down towards Northallerton and Lord Zetland is on the grassy slopes of Streatlarn and neighbourhood. What more do you want, but plenty of horses—and Melton itself? Croft, again, is set down by many people as having been the Handley Cross of Mr. Surtees' creation: and for proof they

point out that not only is the country round very much of the class we have learned to connect with that typical Hunt, but that Mr. Pigg's famous songs were chiefly culled here. As against this, we read little or nothing in the annals of Jorrocks to lead one to suppose that foxhunting was to be had with other packs than his own—though, for that matter, it is only fair to conclude from what we read, that Xerxes and Arterxerxes had their work fully cut out for them near home, without being taken afield in search of variety. At any rate, Croft is nowadays a favourite hunting centre, to which the north-countrymen look for change of scene and variety of excellent sport. It is about an hour and a half's journey from York, two hours from Newcastle, and between five and six hours from London.

The Hurworth is not a difficult country to cross, though calling for a hunter—and a stout one. The hedges are not laid, but are either trimmed or left ragged—the latter being the more prevalent plan in the north, while in the south the fences are found much lower and the range of vision is consequently more untrammelled. The ditches are deep, often wide, and occasionally double. The ground gets very deep and holding; and a horse must be short-legged and short-backed to make his way fairly over it. Timber is a rare obstacle; but water very frequent (though more often in the form of boggy ditches or bottoms than fair brooks). Strength and pluck are therefore very essential attributes. Good breeding is a recognised advantage in every sphere. And, again, few horsemen care to ride behind bad shoulders; but,

should necessity compel the experiment, it would surely be safer where top binders do not exist, and strong rails are almost unknown.

The Hurworth hounds get the best of their blood at different times from the Brocklesby, Mr. Musters, Hon. Mark Rolle, and Lord Portman—sources all tending to power of nose and the best working qualities. The field that accompanies them is at all times rather a small one; but includes in its numbers a strong sprinkling of farmers who have the interests of the Hunt thoroughly at heart.

The hunting days of the Hurworth are Tuesday and Saturday. The former, being for the north of the country, brings out people from Darlington and Stockton; and so ensures the larger fields. The north, too, as already mentioned, has the strongest coverts. Of these, Fighting Cocks whin (a gorse of some fourteen or fifteen acres) is quite one of the main strongholds; and the foxes from it often run far into the Durham territory. On a par with it is Elton whin—the property of Mr. John Sutton of Elton, who is a staunch preserver for both Hunts (the Hurworth and South Durham). For each of these good coverts Fighting Cocks is the usual meet. Close to Darlington are the Blackwell Plantations, from which some great runs have dated; and the fixture, with a view to drawing these, and other small places in the neighbourhood, is probably Croft Bridge. Coming South of the River Tees, into Yorkshire, we find the meet of High Worsall Tollbar, having Worsall whin and another stronghold—Beverley Wood. The latter (the property of Mrs. Blackett, of Sockburn,) is

a capital fastness by the riverside. The Tees flows just underneath it, and it is a difficult place to get away from; but foxes seldom cross the river into Durham. Crathorne is another meet, leading to Picton Plantations, which often hold a fox.

Saturday takes them into the south, and the best of their country. Deighton and Welbury are two good meets for the same district. From Deighton whin they frequently run into the Bedale country, for instance, to Hutton Bonville, &c., while from Welbury —where the gorse has been down for some years, but where Lord Harewood is now making a fine new whin —they have had many good runs up to the hills.

Northallerton, with a fox assured, is held to be one of the best meets in Yorkshire. Hutton's Plantations often produce a straight fox that will set his head for the hills—for Mr. Hutton is a keen preserver, and does his utmost to have the all-needful animal at home. The Crosby Plantations give another good chance; and so does Bullamore Winn (well cared for by Mr. Oliver, a farmer). Cotcliffe Wood—a great hillside wood—is a very strong place; while quite on the southern edge of the country is a "willow garth," from which more than one gallop has emanated. The only places on the hills themselves, to which hounds ever resort, are Thimbleby and Arncliffe Wood on the edge of the moors.

THE CATTISTOCK.*

The south-west quarter of the very sporting county of Dorset forms the Cattistock Country—the Blackmoor Vale being immediately to the north of it, while the East Dorset and Mr. Radcliffe's (The South Dorset) take up the rest of the Shire. The sea bounds it on the south; and Crewkerne, Bridport, Weymouth, and Dorchester are towns defining its borders. A single brief sentence will convey a very fair idea of the Cattistock—as far as the nature of its ground is concerned. It consists of an upland centre of closed down, with a strip of rich vale at the foot on every side—save on part of its eastern frontier. The down is hilly and chalky, with a surface of grassy sheepwalk and light barley land; the vale is rich soil, devoted almost entirely to dairy farming. The hills are divided into enclosures of fifty to a hundred acres: the vale is laid out in little meadows which call for jumping incessantly. Old Jim Treadwell, who died soon after his master, Mr. Farquharson—the latter, be it remembered, having hunted the whole of Dorsetshire at his own expense for upwards of sixty years—was wont to

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 20; and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

say that the Cattistock district was as well preserved, that its foxes were as strong, and that it carried as good a scent as any part of the county. The low country seldom denies a scent; the upper ground—at least the arable of it—should have rain-puddles lying on its surface to be really seen at its best. The hills are as steep and trying as those of the Cotswold—and if the fences avail in any degree to keep hounds back to horses, they act in an opposite direction in calling upon the latter for a strong effort when they are least able to afford it. Still it is always well within the bounds of possibility for a good horse to live with hounds over the Cattistock Hills—and, if he can do this and travel the vale creditably besides, he is equal to holding his own in any country. Breeding he must have, and strength. Irish education, or at all events Irish instinct, is wanted—for with the Cattistock, as in the Blackmoor Vale, hindlegs have by no means completed their office when they have given the first propulsion. They must "kick back" to the razor banks on the hills, and they may often be called upon to dwell a moment before making a second spring from the broader banks of the vale. The former fences have often a double ditch; while the latter—especially in the actual vale of Blackmoor (a small corner of which is hunted by the Cattistock)—are distinguished by having a ditch *and a drop* on the one side, the other side being a higher level of unbroken ground till the bank is reached. On hill and in vale alike the top of the bank is surmounted with ash or hazel growth, which on the hills is generally cut-and-laid; and a horse must be thoroughly bold to face such

a combination in every aspect which it may present to him. A good deal of timber, again, is met with everywhere; mostly in the form of draw-rails in lieu of gateways; such as in Sussex are termed "bar ways," while here they come under the title of "three bars."

But the great feature of the Cattistock Hunt is that its main strength is derived from the tenant farmers. With the exception of the large estates belonging to a very few resident landowners (who themselves lend all possible assistance to the cause of foxhunting), the whole country is not only let out in large farms, but the coverts (mostly small gorses, plantations, and woods) with the shooting are allowed to go with the holdings. The preservation of foxes, consequently, lies almost entirely with the tenant farmers—and right loyally do they carry out their mission. They nearly all follow the chase; and they one and all look after the foxes as carefully as they do their flocks. A poultry-fund they have never allowed to exist; earth-stopping is taken entirely into their own hands; and to fail to find a fox on a man's holding is to him in the light of a personal calamity. Half the field (never a large one, save occasionally in the neighbourhood of Weymouth, where it may rise to a hundred and fifty horsemen) is made up of farmers.

Of the leading resident landowners—there is Lord Ilchester, whose property of Drivend Melbury lies in an angle of vale on the north, and includes the Melbury woodlands (where as many as thirteen litters of foxes are said to have been bred in a season). The Kennels of the Hunt are close to Melbury; Mr.

Codrington, the late Master, living at Evershot hard by. Lord Digby (the chairman and father of the Hunt—and a truly popular sportsman) lives at Minterne Magna, and has coverts and woodlands for miles round—with foxes abundant enough for every week if necessary. Lord Sandwich (who is also a well-wisher to the Cattistock Hunt) has ten or twelve thousand acres in a ring fence about Hook Manor House—his principal coverts being Hook Park and Witherstone.

The Cattistock first started into existence as a separate country about 1861, when Mr J. J. Farquharson gave up hunting the entire county. Lord Poltimore hunted it for twelve years at his own expense; and on his retirement Mr. Codrington took it with a subscription. After five years, he gave it up for a single season, Capt. McNaghten taking his place. Resuming it again the next year, Mr. Codrington has held it till 1882, honoured and appreciated. Lord Guildford now succeeds him, undertaking to hunt the country twice a week (with a possibility of more). His pack will consist of twenty-five couple from Mr. Codrington, with a draft from the Kennel of the late Duke of Grafton, and help from other equally good sources.

To hunt with the Cattistock, Dorchester is a quarter commanding most of the country, and offering equal opportunities of joining Mr. Radclyffe. It is a military station, credited with a battery of artillery and a brigade-depot. The soldiers never fail to attend regularly at covertside parade; and, as Dorchester is within about four hours of London (Waterloo), it is altogether a popular quarter. Weymouth, too, has

its military contingent, and some portion of the fleet, and being of itself a place of considerable size, does a great deal to swell the field when hounds are in the neighbourhood. If, however, a man would restrict himself mainly to the Cattistock, he would in all probability fix upon Maiden Newton as his hunting centre.

It should be noted that Mr. Radclyffe has always shown himself the truest of friends and best of neighbours to the Cattistock Hunt. It is to him they owe the permission they enjoy to draw the Wootton Glanville corner of the Vale of Blackmoor. Though now upwards of seventy years of age, and unable to take any share in the chase beyond driving to an occasional meet, he still maintains his pack and establishment for the amusement of others on a scale as liberal and efficient as ever.*

It has always been found more convenient to arrange the Cattistock meets according to passing requirement and convenience than upon any fixed principle of allotting certain districts to certain days. In giving some few of the chief meets and draws, it may be as well to note the class of ground on which they severally fall. To commence with, there is what is known as the Somerset vale on the north-west—stiff deep and open lowland, strongly fenced with banks and doubles, and seldom a gap to be seen. The coverts are woods of considerable strength, and the

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* Since the above was written this fine old sportsman has been gathered to his forefathers. His youngest son has succeeded him in the Mastership.

foxes are wild and stout. The Taunton vale country touches the Cattistock in this direction, and offers a fine open area for a travelling fox. The principal meets are North Perrot, for Coker Wood and Haselbury Park, and Winyards Gap for Somersetshire Holt, &c. Between the vale and the hills—or rather where the vale works in re-entering angles into the hill—is the fixture of Rampisham House (the residence of an excellent friend to the sport, Mr. Arthur Martin), the main coverts being Rampisham Big Wood, Wraxall Wood, and the smaller Wood of Inn Park.

Bordering on Blackmoor Vale territory, and on ground similar to the best of that Hunt, is the meet of Glanville's Wootton, with Mr. Dale's good coverts of Woodfalls, Wootton Wood, and Round Chimnies, &c.; and in the Cattistock territory proper is that of Drive-end Melbury (Lord Ilchester's, for Briars Wood, The Brick Kiln, and the Melbury coverts).

There is vale again on the west, by Bridport. But the district between Bridport and Beaminster is seldom visited, while beyond it to the west is altogether unhunted ground.

But the favourite country of the Hunt—the apple of its eye—is the Waddon Vale on the sea border to the south. This is nearly all grass, in the form of dairy meadows; its coverts are all small—nothing larger than ten acres of gorse or hazel existing; and, limited as is its breadth, it is productive of frequent and charming sport. Its backbone is found in the Hardy Monument Coverts — some hundreds of acres of scattered gorse, on the brow of the hill. These form a most invaluable nursery, whence foxes roam, or are

driven by constant attention, into the vale below. The best known meet on the low ground is Buckland Ripers—and the whole of the fine vale extending to Bridport may come into use from here. Buckland Wood and Dairy House Coppice are two of the chief coverts in the neighbourhood.

Coming to the Hills we find the Cern Abbas and Mintern downs marked by a free scattering of surface flints, which, however, become less frequent as we get on to Lord Wynford's property at Wynford Eagle. There are several fine coverts on this estate, notably Wynford Wood and Wynholds. Meeting at Hook Park again (Lord Sandwich's), they draw the Park, Witherstone, Powerstock Common, &c. East Compton (the property of Mr. Edward Williams) is a favourite place of meeting; and the Withybed is a certain find. The Coach and Horses, Winterbourne (kept by John Daw, late stud groom to Mr. Codrington), is a common rendezvous for most of the Dorchester district; and points to the Hardy Monument Coverts and various minor gorses—The Monument itself being also often named. Much of the property hereabouts, it should have been mentioned, belongs to Lord Alington. Kingston Russell is the property of the Duke of Bedford; and under the care of his tenants provides many a certain find. Finally, near Bridport is the meet of the Traveller's Rest, with coverts round Askerswell and Eggardon Hill—and the usual opening meet of the season is the Bradford Plantations (Mr. Middleton's).

THE SUFFOLK.*

The Suffolk Hounds hunt over a wide expanse of plough, to the north of the East Essex and the Essex-and-Suffolk countries. They touch the Cambridgeshire, just beyond Newmarket Heath; but on nearly three sides they have no neighbours. The Cambridgeshire fens place a wide gulf between them and the Milton; Mr. Hammond's (the West Norfolk) pack is far away to the north, with a broad district intervening that knows no other sport than shooting; while the Waveney has relinquished a brief existence. With a three-days-a-week pack, the Suffolk cover an area nearly fifty miles across, say, from Needham Market nearly to the town of Cambridge.

It is pleasant, doubtless, to find raids from other countries seldom coming over the border, and an advantage it must be, too, that the favourite draw mapped out for to-morrow is rarely, if ever, spoilt by the successful inroad of a neighbour to-day. But even to this advantage a compensating evil is attached. A fox run out of the country stands little chance of being driven back again; and he is more likely to

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* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 16 and 17, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

remain in security (or otherwise) than to tempt fate by returning to his old haunts. In other words, he gets outside the range of country hunted, and either remains there in peace or, what is much more probable, falls a victim to a keeper. Consequently, as the season advances, the Suffolk country often finds many good coverts unoccupied, and has to face a pronounced difficulty in the form of scarcity of foxes.

Suffolk is, for the most part, so admirably adapted for game breeding, that it is difficult for those who go thither for shooting purposes to recognise that the country should also be credited with foxhunting functions. The residents see it strongly. But it so happens that, while farm rents have of late years been so often represented by the algebraic x, shooting rents, on the contrary, have always been fixed quantities., easily obtainable. Thus many landlords have let houses and game to the stranger; the stranger comes thither to find partridge and pheasant, and Mr. Velveteen's orders, positive enough in reference to these, are too often discretionary (if seldom actually negative) with regard to the fox. As a matter of fact, no county, subordinate to the plough, is better fitted for foxhunting in its fairest form than Suffolk. Its coverts are plentiful, without being too extensive or too thickly packed; the country is open and sound, and everywhere either level or gently undulating. The fences, bank and ditch, are pleasantly rideable without being insignificant, and are frequent enough for the most greedy of jumpers. If foxes were but plentiful, there would be room enough in Suffolk for three more packs of foxhounds; and Yorkshire itself would

scarcely put it to shame. The late Mr. Osbaldeston was wont to say that "a better plough-country did not exist in England." He hunted the Thurlow district (south of Newmarket), at the same time as he did the Pytchley country—keeping hacks posted on the road, and riding his forty-five miles each way for the two days a week he could spare from the Pytchley.

There are of course very many residents still at home in their places in Suffolk; and these are nearly all unanimous in giving their support to foxhunting. But, where good districts and bad dovetail closely into one another, it is difficult indeed to whisper caution into reynard's ear and bid him stay where his only danger is notified him by the merry music of the pack. The farmers are enthusiastically in favour of foxhunting — though recent reverses have sadly diminished their numbers on horseback at the covert side.

The Kennels are at the residence of the Master, Mr. Walter Greene, in Bury St. Edmunds, or rather, on the very edge of the old town—the entrance being into a main street, the outlook at the back being over a green country unbroken by brick and mortar. The Kennels, built by him, are, though small, of the neatest and most complete description. The nose, inured to the *vis odoro canum*—and *boilum*—is startled by the entire absence of the offending vapours with which nine kennels out of ten are ever reeking. Many Masters of Hounds, it is true, have of late adopted odourless boilers on their premises; but many huntsmen care little to what height the meat to be cooked

may have attained. Again, the kennel floors of the Suffolk are all of glazed tiles closely cemented, with a good result that must be obvious. A deep bath, through which the hounds have to swim on their return from hunting, is another addition not commonly met with, though the advantages of it often form subject of discussion, and very many masters dispense with it on principle. Plenty of dry straw, and a warm lodging house, should, however, I imagine, serve to obviate any objections to the use of the bath. The present pack owns a great deal of Fitzwilliam material—the remainder being chiefly from Lord Coventry's Kennel, with part of the late Suffolk pack as a foundation. Mr. Greene has only had them for the last two years—having been forced, in consequence of a severe accident, to resign the mastership in 1875—previous to which he had hunted the hounds for four years. With harriers, staghounds, or foxhounds, Mr. Greene has, with this single intermission, carried a horn since 1864. Mr. Josselyn, who is a fine old sportsman, and had previously held the mastership for many years, took over the Suffolk country during the interval of Mr. Greene's withdrawal.

The north of the country has a much lighter description of soil than the south—being in many parts sandy and flinty, while a great deal of the south is a strong clay. It is needless to say that the latter carries usually the better scent; though, as applies to similar soil elsewhere, the former may hold a scent at the most unexpected times. The inclosures northward are often more extensive than further south, where you sometimes find yourself called upon for a jump

every hundred yards. The fences all stand upon banks, the earth being thrown up to a height of two or three feet, and the single ditch dug to a considerable width and a great depth. The hedges—sometimes thorn alone, sometimes thorn and hazel intermingled—are seldom so closely kept but that weak and open places are forthcoming; for it is obvious that to separate wheat from beans, or even to keep English sheep within bounds requires no such height and strength of fence as where cattle are to be herded. The ditches alone, however, demand a good jump; and though it may be often possible to walk on to the bank before springing across the ditch, it is more frequently necessary to drop the hindlegs alone in passing over, thus securing impetus enough to cover everything. The fences of the Essex Ruthins, close at hand, can often be taken at a fly; but the Suffolk banks call for a double jump, and a slow canter will generally be found the best pace at which to approach them, even when the hounds are running fast.

A strong, stout horse, who has been taught to go on-and-off, will carry a man over the country, not only in safety but pretty nearly wherever hounds will lead him. Tall horses are out of place; and breeding, though so useful when deep ground has to be encountered, must not be accompanied by length of leg. Water is not often met with, though there are one or two brooks which often lead to merriment and small disaster. The chief, perhaps the only, timber jumping, called for is by the stiles and gateways. The latter, always low and feasible, are very commonly

in the form of "lifts," *i.e.*, frames of gates without hinges, slipping into their place as draw rails. Grass is only found here and there as an occasional meadow; and, indeed, does not appear to enter into the calculations of the Suffolk farmers. The coverts, as afore-mentioned, are of a most manageable size. Perhaps only two in the country are over a hundred acres, viz., Fakenham Wood on the Duke of Grafton's property, and Muntz Park (belonging to Mr. Josselyn), close to Bury St. Edmunds. They are of natural growth, such a thing as an artificial gorse being unknown; and the rides, though sometimes deep, compare well with those of woodlands generally.

Bury St. Edmunds is, by position, as well as circumstance, the centre of the Hunt; and is, it may be mentioned, three hours' travel from London. Newmarket is also well within its boundaries, and supplies material for its largest fields—many of the trainers and jockeys (occasionally too, some of the Cambridge undergraduates) turning out to meets in the Thurlow district. Thus the field on these occasions often mounts up to nearly a hundred horsemen.

As may be imagined, cubhunting, in a country whose first passion and object is shooting, is often a matter of difficulty, especially in the north; and, indeed, there are many coverts which hounds, though eventually welcome, are barred from entering until after the game has been shot.

The days of hunting for the Suffolk are Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday—the firstnamed being for the north-east of the country, the other two days for

the south of Bury St. Edmunds, and the north-west corner being seldom visited. The opening meet of the season is Nether Hall, the seat of Mr. E. Greene, M.P., father of the Master. On the property is Pakenham Wood, and close to the house an osier bed, in which a fox is generally to be found. A good fox-preserving neighbour hard by is, among others, Mr. Huddleston, who has some more nice coverts. Within a mile or two is Stowlangtoft, the property of Mr. A. Wilson—a fine place with some beautiful coverts. This has been recently let to Lord Wilton, whose active sympathy with foxhunting is so well known that his coming cannot but be an omen of good. Euston Hall is a large domain of the Duke of Grafton's in the light sandy soil of the far north, with the five-hundred-acre covert of Fakenham Wood upon it, and Ampton (Mr. J. Paley's) and Livermere (Miss Brook's) in the neighbourhood. Nearer the lower and deeper country comes the meet of Norton Dog for Norton Wood—an excellent covert where foxes are always found, and whence they always travel. At Brent Eleigh Hall are some small nice coverts of Mr. Brown's, which are neutral with the Essex and Suffolk; and Finboro' Hall (Major Pettyward's) has similar coverts in a closely inclosed, and a good scenting, country. Mr. G. H. Wilson, too, of Redgrave Hall, generally shows a fox.

Thursday is given to the Thurlow district, the best preserved and most sporting ground of the Hunt. Thurlow Town is a favourite meet, whence is drawn the well-known Trundley Wood, which three or four years ago was bought by Mr. W. H. Smith (late First

Lord of the Admiralty)—a steady friend to the chase. Brinkley Hall is the residence of Mr. W. King, a most invaluable assistant to the Hunt, whose two little coverts were for the last six-and-twenty times never drawn blank. Weston Colville, held by Mr. Slater, has three first-rate coverts, sure finds. From Withersfield they draw The Lawn, a good wood belonging to Mr. Mayd, who also is very friendly to foxhunting. Sir Robert Affleck, of Dalham Hall, preserves foxes heartily.

Horseheath Mill is a meet at the extreme edge of the country, with the draws of Borley and Balsam (a quarter of a mile apart). The former covert is college property, the shooting of which has been recently taken by a keen foxhunter, Mr. G. Ainslie, of Cambridge. Balsam belongs to Mr. Watson, who is also a well-wisher to the Hunt. From Great Wratting, again, are drawn some coverts belonging to the Brothers Frost, and which join Mr. Slater's coverts. Branches Park, a beautiful place and a popular meet, is the seat of Mr. Simpson, who, again, is most friendly and zealous. Kirtling Tower is for Lucy Wood, &c., which are in the good hands of Col. North. Stetchworth Park with its large coverts—*e.g.*, Ditton Park—is leased by Lord Ellesmere, and has seldom failed to provide material. About a mile from here Mr. G. Robinson, of Dullingham Park, has very large coverts, now rented by Mr. Stirling Crawfurd.

Saturday is almost always spent either near the kennels or a little to the east of them, for instance—Haughley Station for Gipping Wood, the property of

Col. Tyrell of Plashwood, a fine old sportsman. From Felsham Green hounds go to Thorpe Wood, sixty or seventy acres of Mr. Sparrow's—a good preserver, who lives in Essex. On a Saturday, too, they go to Hominger Green. Lord Bristol's large property is of immense service to the hunt; for his lordship, though not hunting himself, does all he can to further the interests of foxhunting. At Rushbrook Hall, too, the residence of Mr. Rusbrook, another good supporter, is a capital covert called The Link. Close to the Kennels is Hardwick Wood (Mr. Gibson Cullum), where foxes and pheasants alike are always to be found. Plumpton House (Mr. W. Bevan) has nice coverts and foxes. At Melford Hall lives Sir William Parker, a really good friend to the chase; and his best covert is Lineage. Capt. Starkie Bence's coverts at Kentwell are also close at hand, and have seldom failed to show foxes of recent years.

THE SHROPSHIRE.*

In the present Shropshire country are included the two divisions north and south of the town of Shrewsbury, that in the maps referred to are coloured in as The North Shropshire and The Shrewsbury respectively. Lord Hill, the present Master, hunted the whole between the years 1866-'69. He then relinquished the Shrewsbury side to Mr. Robert Burton, and the country was split into two, Lord Hill still hunting the north side till 1877, when Sir Vincent Corbet became Master. In 1881 Lord Hill again assumed the direction of an united Hunt. His Lordship was wont to carry the horn himself; but of this his health does not now allow, and a huntsman does the three-days-a-week work which the country affords.

Shrewsbury, then, is now the centre-point of The Shropshire Hunt—its domain extending as far as Market Drayton, and almost to Whitchurch, in the north—where Sir Watkin Wynn's, The Cheshire, and the North Staffordshire run, with it, nearly to a common apex. The Albrighton bounds it on the

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 13 and 14, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

east; the Wheatland on the south-east. Its operations do not nowadays extend far enough to touch the United Pack in the south; while the rugged Welsh hills are its only limit to the west and south-west.

A less tempting, and consequently less popular, country than some of its neighbours, The Shropshire, nevertheless, has much good hunting ground, and at least reaps the advantage of knowing nothing of such crowds as often affect the Cheshire and Sir Watkin's. It keeps up a pack of hounds for its own amusement, and its field is entirely home grown. Shrewsbury people can, except by making use of the railway, get no hunting with other packs, beyond a day in the week with Sir Watkin. Whitchurch, just outside the border, is, of course, an excellent place, commanding the Shropshire, Sir Watkin, the South Cheshire, and best meets of the North Staffordshire. Market Drayton gives nearly the same choice, but lies rather wider of the best meets. Shrewsbury is at best some four hours from London (Euston-square); the other two quarters named taking about half an hour longer to reach.

The Severn cutting its way through the country naturally makes two divisions of it; which the features of the ground also tend to maintain. For, the north of the Severn is in the main a level plain; while to the south, when once out of the vale of Shrewsbury (which forms the bed of the Severn), you find yourself soon on higher and more broken country.

Looking at the northern half of the Shropshire, the question at once suggests itself—"*Why* should it be

a less fashionable country than some of the others which immediately surround it?" The answer is to be found in the fact that it cannot offer nearly such pleasant riding. Whereas almost all of the Cheshire, and most of Sir Watkin's, is laid out in goodly turf and well-kempt fences, the bulk of the Shropshire soil is turned up by the plough—while its hedges are cut down, its ditches are overgrown with bramble and grass, and drainage is in many parts of the most insufficient description. Thus, Shropshire territory may be found deep and trappy even where it approaches closest to some of the cream of Cheshire. For instance, where it reaches the neighbourhood of Whitchurch (as for example, about Prees) it has only wet, and even boggy, ground as its share; whereas on other sides of the little town some of the soundest and fairest grass is to be seen. Whitchurch, by the way, is rapidly establishing itself as a high class hunting centre—having of late years launched out freely in the erection of hunting boxes and stabling, and meeting with a proportionate response.

Below this, however, comes perhaps the pick of the country—the district stretching across its breadth by Acton Reynold and Ercall to the North Staffordshire and Albrighton boundaries, beyond which, again, a fox may travel on over some very nice country. The inclosures of this tract are comparatively large; a great deal of grass has been laid down in late years; and it is decidedly good scenting ground. As above noted, the hedges, which at one time were high, strong, and ragged, have in most instances been cut down during the last decade, till often only stumps

and short growth remain, and the ditches have been allowed to hide themselves in masses of overgrowing briars. Timber is seldom met with except where a stile is put down as an adjunct to a footpath—the latter offering an opportunity of fair sound going that is not to be missed, the stile at the same time proffering a jump that is quite as acceptable as a blind fence and hairy ditch. Water is not frequent; but the Ercall Brook leads to a lot of difficulty, for it is seldom jumpable; and getting through it, though often necessary, is generally an awkward and dirty process.

Moving south and nearing Shrewsbury, we find a deep and heavily wooded district surrounding Preston-Gubballs, Battlefield, and Sundorne—the latter being the seat of Mr. Corbet, who is also the owner of Battlefield. The two former are the largest woodlands of the country; and are very deep within and without. But they are good strongholds for foxes, and may lead to a run over some nice ground in the direction of Baschurch. The same level to the eastward brings us to the Wild Moors, a wide extent of wet and swampy land, intersected by wide open ditches and patches of bog—and, indeed, scarcely traversable by a horse, though foxes often take a fancy for crossing it.

Below the canal, and between it and the river, is a capital piece of ground from Shrewsbury to Wellington, but unfortunately short of coverts. Could a few gorses be set down about Admaston and Rodington (where at present only a withybed or two exist) the choicest corner of the country might

be drawn into play. As it is there is nothing to draw foxes down from The Wrekin on the one side, or from Sundorne or Haughmond on the other. The Wrekin is a great wooded height—a landmark for many miles—among whose rocky sides a fox is secure from all attacks and can laugh his pursuers to scorn. Occasionally a wanderer finds his way down to Attingham on the river bank, and gives a pleasant chivvy back to his quarters; but of late this has been a rarity.

South of the Severn, again, the country at once assumes a closer and rougher type. The inclosures are smaller, the hedges grow strong and high, the ditches are deep, and the banks often rotten. Immediately south of Shrewsbury—say from Bomer to Acton Burnell—is the pick of this below-river section, and coming under the head of what the natives term "very good Shropshire country"—by which they infer, probably, sporting, good-scenting ground, mostly plough, and better for hounds than for horsemen. This district includes from Cound on the riverside, Pitchford, Condover, and Stapleton to Oaks Wood—beyond which, again, begin hills and broken ground, whither hounds are seldom taken.

The Kennels are at Lee Bridge, about ten miles north of Shrewsbury; and the hounds, formerly the property of the present master, were bought by the country on the occasion of his former resignation. Some of the meets require a long journey by road (the rail being never used)—Acton Burnell and Loton Park, for instance, being about twenty miles from Kennel. Lord Hill's place is Hawkstone, some three

miles away. His coverts, which are very strong and extensive, deck the sides of a hill rising by itself to a height of some 900 feet, and form a point to attract two out of every three foxes set a' going in the northern or Monday country.

A strong sturdy hunter must be ridden with the Shropshire—and one who has learned to creep and crawl as well as to obey his natural instinct to jump. He will often have to travel far, even if he does not often have to journey quick: and so, stoutness is of more consequence with him than speed. The farmers were wont to breed many good horses, but appear to have abandoned the practice in proportion as straightened circumstances of recent years have limited their own hunting. However, the farmers of Shropshire are keen sportsmen, and are gradually working their way back to their former numbers at the covertside.

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are the hunting-days—Monday being, as a rule, to the north and north-east of the kennels; Friday between the kennels and the town of Shrewsbury; and Wednesday below the river.

A few of the Monday meets are—Hodnet (Mr. Percy's), with a capital draw in Tunstall Wood and a nice country stretching away to the east; Ellerton (Capt. Maesfield's); Hinstock (Mr. Williams'); Ercall Heath; and Peplow (Mr. Stanyer's); all in the best part of the country, and having some good little coverts in their neighbourhood. Stoke Heath and Buntingdale (Mr. Tailyour's) are favourite fixtures near Market Drayton. Tremlows is a choice meet in

the extreme north—the covert itself lying in Sir Watkin Wynn's territory, but lent by him to the Shropshire. Many a good run into Cheshire or Staffordshire has had its origin here—though, as from many of the other places above mentioned, the chances are in favour of Hawkstone being reached in the course of the day.

Friday includes the deep strong woodlands towards Shrewsbury—Battlefield being usually named when that stronghold and Preston Gubballs are to be drawn. Holly Coppice, close to Shrewsbury, is the meet for Sundorne and Haughmond Hill. These coverts are chiefly of hazel; and, as the season gets on, generally carry a good scent. Acton Reynold (Sir Vincent Corbet's) is always considered a good meet, leading to Grinshill (a rough wooded and sandy hill), with pleasant open ground all round and a prospect of running to Hardwick (Mr. Bibby's) or Haughmond Hill. Leaton Knolls is another strong woodland, and about Shelf are several big woods. In the Baschurch neighbourhood is again a nice bit of ground. Meeting at Walford, they have some coverts of Mr. Eyton's to draw; while at Merrington are several large coverts, Merrington Green being the ordinary meet. The Fifth Milestone, Baschurch Road, is often fixed for the same district. Farther east, again, is Shawbury, for Sir Thomas Meyrick's good wood of Withyford. On the Crudgington side the most common meet is Ercall Mill, with the Wild Moors stretching for miles to the south-east, a scarcely rideable waste. But away to the north is all good country, with more grass than elsewhere, and fences fair and tempting. The largest

fields of the Hunt are found mustered here, as it is about midway between Shrewsbury and Wellington—though the maximum of a hundred is seldom exceeded.

Of the Wednesday meets, Atcham Bridge, a couple of miles down the river from Shrewsbury, has always been the meet following the Hunt Ball at that place. The Attingham estate (Lord Berwick's) may be drawn from here, and there is a withybed by the river; while at Longner Hall (Mrs. Burton's) there are good coverts where foxes have always been found. From any of these a fox might go across the flat to The Wrekin, or turn up to Haughmond Hill. At one time they always took the former course, and ensured a lively gallop. On the other bank of the river is Cound, whence a fox should have every reason to strike off to Pitchford or Bomer, taking the best line obtainable on this side. Perhaps the best meet of the district is Cruckton (Gen. Jenkins's), where there are always plenty of foxes, and a sporting country lies all round. At Cundover is a large park with several fine coverts; and from here hounds probably draw on to Bomer, where there is a large rough wood surrounding a pool. Pitchford (Lady Louisa Cotes') is another fixture near; and to the south Acton Burnell (Sir Fred. Smyth's) is quite a stronghold for foxes, on the edge of the hills. The farthest meets to the west are Loton Park (Sir Baldwin Leighton's) and Hanwood. At the latter is Hanwood Gorse and some other coverts; from these to Oaks Wood is an useful gallop—after which you get at once on the hills.

THE EARL OF RADNOR'S.*

Longford Castle, the seat of Lord Radnor, being close to Salisbury, his lordship has for the last eleven or twelve years kept a pack of foxhounds to hunt the downs and woodlands of the neighbourhood. The South Wilts, on the occasion of its amalgamation with the West Wilts, handed over to him an extensive tract on the south-west of Salisbury as far as the borders of the East Dorset; the Tedworth gave him a piece of country on the east of the cathedral city (up to the vicinity of Stockbridge); and the New Forest contributed ground as far as Downton on the left bank of the Avon and Harbridge on the right. Altogether, with the advantage of strong coverts almost innumerable, his lordship has ample ground for three days a week—for which he keeps some five and forty couple of hounds. The pack, though of comparatively recent creation, possesses strength and substance in a marked degree; and is also said to make the most of a country in which, without power of nose and steady perseverance, a foxhound can achieve but little. Its early blood was derived chiefly

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 21, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

from the Kennels of Lord Fitzhardinge, Lord Portsmouth, and the Bramham Moor.

The Hampshire Avon, flowing directly southward from Salisbury, cuts through the country at its narrowest point; and runs down its edge to separate it from the jungly wastes of the New Forest—a totally different kind of ground, as compared with what is met with over the greater part of Lord Radnor's country. The latter partakes largely of the character possessed by the Tedworth, much of the Craven, and many parts of the H. H. and other Hampshire countries. The open hillsides, once grassy downs, have now to a great extent been ploughed up—the thin turf giving way to light flint covered arable, good for neither agriculture nor foxhunting. Where the down remains untouched, a flying scent is frequently experienced; but the plough requires a thorough wetting before it will hold anything like a fair scent. On a sterling scenting day, hounds can of course fling at a great pace over these steep unfenced hills; and a fast well-bred horse alone will live with them. For such ground he need not be an accomplished hunter, in the strictest sense of the definition; for he will meet with little if anything demanding a collected and educated effort. But, if occasion allows of hounds running, he must be able to collar hill and vale without flinching or tiring. On the edge of the New Forest, on the other hand, banks-and-ditches call for all the astuteness of an Irish hunter. Again, where strong hazel-fences divide such inclosures as are scattered between the various woodlands of the upper half of the country, horse and man must both possess a due

talent for working their way about. And the rider must possess both perseverance and discrimination if he can work his way honestly through a series of wide strong coverts, to emerge at the right time and point, as the pack breaks into the open. The woodlands are wide, extensive, and here and there run in a lengthy chain, which a fox can scarcely be made to leave unless he is so inclined. But the rides are in very few instances excessively deep; and the hazel growth, at any rate after midwinter, lets hounds easily through. So the chase often pushes merrily on, and the ear is frequently the only guide for many a mile. This especially applies to the mass of great coverts stretching to the east and south-east of the Kennels. For instance, from Clarendon (Sir F. Bathurst's place) to Bentley Wood and Spirewell (or Sperywell) Wood is a continuous chain whose links show never a gap of more than a field or two. And, again, in the Standlinch direction, the woodlands which include Trafalgar (Lord Nelson's), The Earldoms, Langford Wood, Meanwood, Gatmore and Melchet Court (Lady Ashburton's) form a series in which a stranger must cling very closely and untiringly to hounds, if ever he is to clear himself. A succession of woods also follow the west bank of the Avon; but these are, individually, of much smaller size, averaging something between twenty and forty acres. On the river bank, as above mentioned, the country assimilates itself in some slight degree to that of the New Forest. The soil, however, though wet and undrained, is nowhere heavy and sticky. Across the river it soon assumes the wild, heathery and often swampy, aspect that retains

for the district its true forest type. But on Lord Radnor's side, it rises directly to down and wold, where a loose light surface too often thwarts the nose of a foxhound, and the sharp flints hinder, and frequently gash, his feet. Thus all the Marten and Whitchbury district—up to the town of Salisbury—consists almost entirely of open hillsides, with scarcely any fences to divide the fields; while patches of gorse grow here and there, and narrow valleys — often owning a watermeadow or two—cut in between hill and hill. Under this upper ground, from Breamore downwards to Alderholt, &c., come the line of river-side coverts. The White Parish district, again, contains another similar range of high ground, with the woodlands already alluded to bounding it north and south: and a third area of the same kind is found in the Buckholt and Houghton Hills, which verge on the broad upland sweeps of the Tedworth.

As a matter of fact, the Salisbury neighbourhood is not distinctively or exclusively a foxhunting one. A certain small number of people come out hunting; and the squires and farmers support the sport, with their countenance if not always with their presence. Here and there shooting is thought of to a certain extent, but seldom to a degree that is incompatible with the preservation of foxes; for game rearing is carried to no great excess in Wiltshire, nor is London sufficiently near to tempt the itinerant pothunter to bid for shooting here. Consequently the fox has, save in occasional instances, few enemies; and his many friends are enabled to maintain him in sufficient

security. The field to assist in the chase, however, seldom exceeds twenty or thirty members.

The southern portion of the country forms by far the largest of the three sections we have spoken of—stretching, as it does, from the town of Salisbury to the edge of the great woodlands of Cranbourne Chace, in the South and West Wilts territory. On the hills are such meets as Toyde, for Lodge Bottom and the Down; Boulsbury Farm for Boulsbury Wood and Martin Wood; Jervoise's Farm for Mr. Jervoise's gorse and Bishopston Gorse. Again, Martin Wood or Vernditch may be named with a view to drawing either of these fine coverts, or for the gorses on the downs. Alderholt Mill, or Park, is the usual meet for the southernmost of the range of riverside woods, *e.g.*, Mr. Churchill's, &c.; Breamore for Breamore Wood and Sir Edward Hulse's other coverts; and Homington and Charlton for Lord Radnor's own coverts. Broad Chalk is also a hill fixture, on the far west.

In the south-east, or White Parish, corner, again, are the meets of Whitcherington for Lord Radnor's coverts on the east of the river; Meanwood, for that stronghold and Gatmore, &c.; White Parish Hill, for Mr. Bent's Gorse and the Bushes, with the big woods to fall back upon. The Bushes was the starting point of one of the best runs of last season; when they took their fox through the great Bentley Wood, to ground at Buckholt after a very hard fifty minutes.

The northern district owns some of the strongest and most extensive woods of the country, backed by lofty downs towards the Tedworth side. For the

woodlands, which run in almost unbroken succession from Clarendon to Bentley Wood, they meet at Clarendon, Houndwood, Spirewell, &c. In the narrow vale of Alderbury, Dean and the railway—whence the ground gradually rises to the northward—is Lockerley Hall (Mr. Dalgetty's); and on the upper level is Roche Court for the Buckholt Hills. A considerable amount of grass remains about here; but it can scarcely be said to be good scenting ground.

CAPT. HON. F. JOHNSTONE'S.*

SCARBOROUGH scarcely sets up to be a hunting quarter; and, favourite a resort though it is, its attractions are generally associated more with sea-bathing and systematic idleness than with strong exercise and the sport of kings. Its visitors may dress and walk, or even dance, but they do little else; and even the literature with which they beguile their hours of nothingness is more likely to be that of "Ouida" and the weekly paragrapher than of Surtees or the recorders of sport and pastime. In fact, not only do most people go to Scarborough for anything but foxhunting; and at a time of year when hounds are, like themselves, wiling the days away in yawning and slumber; but most of them belong to a class that has little thought of foxhunting under any conditions. At the same time a certain number of sound sportsmen have of late availed themselves of the improved railway facilities, to gain the advantages of Scarborough during the winter, while not separating themselves too widely from home or business ties in other parts of the county. At the back of the town,

Vide Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 5 and 6, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

hill and moorland shortly present themselves, suggestive of grouse shooting, and summer excursion, but telling little of the chase of the fox, as in reality carried on.

But, taking advantage of all ground within reach that is at all practicable for his purpose, Capt. Johnstone keeps a good little pack of foxhounds in the neighbourhood of Scarborough, and hunts the fox over vale and heather wherever he can. He commences just north of Lord Middleton (the river Derwent being the boundary between them) with a strip of low country, set down on the map as The Vale of Pickering, but more often known as the Derwent Vale. Above this the land rises quickly to moor and heather, strong hills and deep glens; where only one who has thoroughly learned the ground can keep a hold upon the pack. The hills are generally fair riding, to man and horse accustomed to brush quickly over the heather; but the glens and dales, like the coombs of North Devon, are only to be crossed by well-known paths — probably mere cattle or sheep tracks. A bright green patch in a valley may often mean the one spot to be avoided. On the heather you are safe; but the tempting grass may cover a deep unpleasant bog. Such pitfalls, however, are nothing like as common as on Exmoor; and, though "Stony Moor," or Raindale, is freely scattered over with boulders, there are no such tracts of stone and shingle as are to be found on the rugged slopes round Dunkery. The Dales again, though steep and wooded, have little of the depth or severity of the Devonshire coombs. With these modifications the moorland half

of Capt. Johnstone's country irresistibly forces a comparison with that hunted by Mr. Nicholas Snow and the Stars of the West. As there, too, foxes are plentiful, and in the early autumn generally easily found. But as the litters are dispersed, and foxes get scattered, such a wide choice of shelter is open to them that it is difficult for a huntsman to decide where to draw, and he may often have to go over miles of country in his search. Every sheltered bank furnishes covert; every little glen is a snuggery, and every square yard of heather is sufficient for a kennel. But, if time and patience are often stretched before a find is obtained, it generally follows that hounds get away close at their fox, and a run is already half-assured. Excellent scenting ground, too, is the moor; and horses are often extended to their utmost to keep hounds in sight. A hard pressed fox will naturally cling to a path if he can find one, and avoid the dragging heather over which of course the longer stride of his pursuers would put him at every disadvantage. Along a grass-walk hounds must necessarily run in almost single file, the leading hounds alone holding the scent, and being answerable that a sharp turn right or left is not overshot. However, they seldom fail to stick to their fox on the wild uplands; and often account for him quite unassisted.

The watershed of the country would seem to be but a very short distance from, and parallel to, the sea line. Thus the river Derwent and many of its auxiliaries have their source among the hills at little distance from the sea coast, and then set to work to run directly inland till they eventually join the Ouse.

The early career of each of these is through a wooded dale, more or less rugged and deep, and affording the most tempting harbour for foxes. But the most notable of these is the Newton Dale, an enormous glen pointing nearly north and south above the town of Pickering, and having the Malton railway and the little river Pickering winding along its base. Dense covert clothes both its sides; and a fox breaking from here is pretty sure to embark upon rough wild ground.

A railway now also runs from Pickering to Scarborough along the Derwent vale, by no means improving the already attenuated strip of low country beneath the hills. Near the foot of these last are several large coverts, a considerable proportion of which are the property of the Dowager Lady Downe, whose estates stretch north and south of Wykeham for many miles. Bedale and Yedmandale, for instance, are woods of great strength. About Seamer Lord Londesborough has large coverts on his property; and the river Derwent coming from the northward has almost continuous covert from Hackness till it issues on to the plain. This vale, cultivated in mixed grass and plough, and fenced in ordinary Yorkshire style, reaches to the sea. Below Wykeham occurs a certain amount of awkward carr ground, much of the same class as that which, farther south, Lord Fitzwilliam and the Grove divide between them—black open dykes, awing any but the boldest. Along the Derwent Vale are some few winns; but, speaking generally, artificial coverts are by no means a feature of Capt. Johnstone's country.

The vale opens out a good deal below Pickering,

affording a most useful area of open ground from Howe Bridge along the south-west of the country, and up past Kirkby-Misperton, to Haugh Wood. Near Pickering the inclosures grow smaller, grass is plentiful, the fences strong, the ditches wide and deep, and timber is freely met with. Add to this that on the hills are many stone walls, it will be easy to understand that a really first-class horse is wanted with Capt. Johnstone's hounds. Nearly every kind of fence has to be encountered; and, while at one moment he is making his way over a stiff Yorkshire vale, he may find himself at the next climbing a steep hillside with the prospect of a racing gallop over the undulating moor on the top. Thus he must be a hunter from every point of view—a bold, strong jumper, and bred to gallop and to stay. Fortunately, the farmers of this part of Yorkshire still turn their attention to producing animals that do them credit and bring them a profit; and many good horses are bred in the neighbourhood.

The crude hill ground outside Capt. Johnstone's country to the north and west, together with the cliffs on the north-east, is hunted in old-fashioned style by trencher fed packs—to wit, the Sinnington, the Eskdale and the Stainton Dale—each member of the Hunt, generally a farmer, keeping a hound or two, in whose doings he maintains a deep vested interest. The last-named pack, by the way, scarcely usurps such an extended and definite district as is laid down for it in the maps alluded to. Saltersgate is the extreme northern point at which Capt. Johnstone's hounds are seen.

The pack is kennelled at Snainton, about midway on the main road between Scarborough and Pickering, and some nine or ten miles from either place. The question naturally suggests itself—Why should a private pack be kept so far from the owner's residence? A single glance at the wild heath and hill that intervene between Hackness Hall and most of the places of meeting is a sufficient answer. If not an impossible task, it would be a rough and cruel one, to bring hounds home across these miles of broken waste, at the end of a day's work which must often have been severe and trying in the extreme. The hounds have been in the Johnstone family (Lord Derwent's) since 1862; previous to which Mr. John Hill, who had succeeded his father in 1855, sold his hounds to the late Duke of Grafton. They are thus no newly-raised pack; and of late years every pains has continued to be bestowed upon their breeding, with the assistance of the Bramham Moor, the Brocklesby and Lord Middleton.

One or two other features of the country that may be mentioned are—the tract of rabbit warren which is met with immediately above Thornton Dale; the increasing roughness of ground that presents itself as you move thence towards the centre of the country—the neighbourhood of Cross Cliffe and Bickley being especially wild; the great wooded bank formed by Trouts Dale; the enormous woodland of the Forge Valley, extending from Raincliffe to the Scurve hills; and the "becks," which so often present a difficulty in the district below Pickering. The latter, though in themselves often only insignificant trout streams, have

their beds cut so deep and their banks so worn and rotten from the rushing of frequent torrents from the hills, that in many instances (such as that of the Costa Beck) it is almost impossible for a horse to get in and out of them.

Capt. Johnstone hunts two days a week—Tuesday being generally for the Pickering side of the country, Saturday for the Scarborough. The latter day, except when given to the extreme wilds of Jingleby Thorn, &c., draws the larger field (sometimes close upon a hundred); the former getting together a small gathering from The Sinnington, Malton, &c., to assist the local Hunt.

Among the Tuesday meets are Howe Bridge—or Newstead Grange—for Marishes Winn and a new covert at Howe Bridge. With open vale stretching up past Pickering and to the west these two fixtures are looked upon as almost the best in the Hunt; and from the Marishes last season there ensued one of their most notable day's sport, commencing with a very fast hour and twenty minutes northward with a kill, followed by another forty minutes with a similar result. A second draw from Howe Bridge may be Wintofts, where a new covert has been planted by Mr. Mitchelson. Meeting at Thornton Dale, they work over the rabbit warrens and up the dale past Ellerburn, whence foxes are pretty sure to run over the moors. Last winter hounds ran into each of the four foxes they found, after a hunt over the moorland. For the extensive fastness of Newton Dale one meet is Farwath; others are Levisham and Salter's Gate—the country round getting rougher and rougher as we

proceed northward. Cawthorne is for Mr. Mitchelson's covert (composed chiefly of larch and heather), with a gorse belonging to Mr. Watson, a very good old sportsman. Pickering being advertised, there is a forty-acre "willow garth" at Keld's Head; or they may proceed at once to draw the Haugh Wood (belonging to the Duchy of Lancaster), and Pickering Parks, where is a long belt of covert. Allerston is for Givendale or Wilton Winn (Lord Hotham's).

A Saturday fixture near Scarborough is Seamer, usually for The Meets (small fir plantation in the vicinity of Cayton), after which hounds may very likely be brought back to Edgehill and Raincliffe. Ayton is for Hutton Buscel Plantations, whence they may get to the woods of Yedmandale or Bedale. Sir Digby Cayley has coverts at Brompton and Allerston; and Ebberston, it should be noted, was the chief residence of Squire Osbaldeston. It was from here he shot his famous match with Mr. Ross. Ruston Bridge would probably be the meet for Brompton Winn. When hounds go to Hackness they have chains of rough bank covert laid out before them for miles. Jingleby Thorns is for the central moors and Lloyd's coverts; and Harwood Dale Mill is also for similar broken ground.

THE SOUTH DURHAM.*

The present South Durham, as most of the world—*all* the northern world—knows, was originally a main part of the country hunted by the celebrated Ralph Lambton in the early part of the present century.

There were no railroads in those days, and not a quarter the collieries. The bones of Ralph Lambton would rattle in their grave if a whisper could go into his coffin, that the map of his old hunting grounds was now cut and striped with red lines—as closely and promiscuously as the back of a comrade-robbing soldier, expiating his offence on a gunwheel. *Tempora mutantur*; neither the simile nor the chart is any longer fitting. We live in an age of progress: our sentiments are more refined, if our morals are no purer; every man is as good as his neighbour, better if he claims no parentage, far better if the slur of education is not upon him—but somehow foxhunting survives. Even an almost unexampled labyrinth of railways, such as Upper Durham can show, does not avail to crush it. Lord Fitzwilliam has shown what can be done against the black genii of the earth in

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 5, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

West Yorkshire. He manages almost to disregard them, and in North Durham their presence, never actively inimical, is taken into a kind of semi-alliance. It may be noticed, by those who care to throw a glance over these sketches of Hunting Countries, that in every single one some prominent drawback is brought forward; that everywhere there is some obnoxious agent knocking the gilt off the gingerbread, the bloom off the flower. Here it is an habitual cold scent, there it is the impracticability of riding with hounds on a hot one. In another instance, coverts are too big and frequent; in the next they are too small and sparse. In one country it is too hilly, in another it is too flat and sticky. Here, nothing to jump; there, too much or too stiff; here there is all plough; there all grass—and a crowd that drives two men out of three right about, to a sense of content with their native difficulties. Eleusis does not exist. But it is fun and heart's content wherever hounds run. So we have all said before; and so shall we hold while we can grip the pigskin and the pen.

But it is with South Durham that we have now to do—a fair proportion of which is still open enough to allow of the scream of the whip being heard above the whistle of the railway engine, the clang of the colliery, or the din of iron works. The margin of the South Durham is divided from the North Durham by a line from Bishop Auckland—by Spennimore to Thornley and the sea. But Sedgefield is the marking-point of the country. Go south and go east—and you may hunt in comfort if not in absolute luxury. It was never more than this, even in the days of Ralph

Lambton of blessed memory, for even then Durham was by no means the pick of the north. Mostly a level, well-ploughed plain—you may follow a fox over it for many a mile, gaining plenty of interest, but meeting with but little excitement by the way. From Sedgefield to the east there is much damp sedgy ground—firm enough, however, to ride over, and more than fair scenting ground withal. Deep sticky clay is the facing of most of the country, yet hounds seldom fail to carry a line over it; while, as with the Hurworth next door, they fly over the occasional grass. Between field and field are wide ragged thorn hedges growing out of banks of varied height, on one side of which—sometimes on both—a ditch is to be seen, or to be felt. Through the tangled hairy mass a horse should move as cautiously and leisurely as possible, setting down one foot after another to assure himself of his ground, and jumping only as he finds himself immediately over the ditch; or he should jump on to the growers to make a gap for himself. For this kind of progress nothing is really so suitable as an animal one degree above the "cob" class—shortlegged, strong, and steady, anything but fast and flighty. A hunter of high degree is altogether out of place here; though Sir William Eden hunted the country with a stud that had no superior in England—the individuals of which were on his retirement dispersed through the Shires for sums ranging to five hundred guineas. Durham, indeed, has always had full justice done to it on the part of the mastership. Its most successful era, no doubt, was in connection with the celebrity "'ard Squier Lamb-

ton" above-mentioned—of whose pack James Pigg sang:

> That for stoutness, pace, beauty, on this side of Heaven,
> Unrivalled the hounds o'er which Lambton presides.

Adding also,

> Then that Sedgefield, our country, all countries outvies, sir,
> The highest top-sparkling bumper decides,
> That we've foxes can fly, sir, or sinking must die, sir,
> When pressed by the hounds o'er which Lambton presides.

On Mr. Lambton's death, the late Lord Londonderry hunted the southern part; while the north was undertaken by a committee of three, viz., Mr. W. Russell (who looked after the kennel), Mr. J. Harvey (who presided in the field), and Mr. J. Henderson. After a time the Durham Country again reunited, under the management of a committee, with Lord Londonderry at the head. In 1872, it will be remembered, rabies broke out in the kennel; and the whole of the famous old Lambton pack had to be destroyed. Masters of Hounds, however, responded from all sides; and, by their generosity, another pack was immediately collected. The following year Mr. Anthony Maynard took the northern division; and Mr. John Harvey the south. Finally, Sir William Eden's mastership (which, though brief, had been marked by most generous expenditure and by the building of new kennels at Rusheyford) was last year handed over to Mr. R. Ord, the present Master of the South Durham.

Small as the country is (a square of thirteen miles' breadth really representing the pith of the ground available) foxes are everywhere so well preserved that

five days a fortnight can be managed. Plantations and whins almost entirely constitute the coverts ; for, with the exception of the woods at Wynyard (where foxes are found congregated in great numbers as spring approaches) there is nothing that can be called a woodland stronghold in the country. The Wynyard woods are of great extent, with ample rides cutting in every direction. At Castle Eden Dene in the extreme north-east is a great wooded dingle running down to the sea. But here we get into the coalpit district, which virtually annuls the whole of the northern border for foxhunting purposes — though foxes lie everywhere, and are even found on the very banks of the collieries. Good foxes they are too ; stout, ready to travel, and loth to die. The fields that turn out to see them hunted are often almost ridiculously small— consisting only of a sprinkling of residents, a few farmers, and perhaps a dozen representatives of the coal and iron interests. Nevertheless, the sport is well countenanced ; and certainly no one interferes with reynard's safety. The colliers show their personal interest by turning out on foot in great numbers whenever the chase comes within their reach.

As a rule, the inclosures are small, and the greater proportion of them are under the plough. Mr. Pigg's song above quoted speaks of "the widespreading pastures of Sadberge"; but much of the grass has disappeared since then—though the Long Newton and Bishopton corner, abutting on the Hurworth and Lord Zetland's, is still held to be the cream of the country. The ballad of the run "fre Foxhill," put also in the mouth of the same vigorous songster, recalls almost

every point of note in this favourite district: and readers may thus be referred at once to page 414 of Mr. Jorrock's biography. Two points at least are to be gleaned from perusal of the poem. One is, that a vast amount of sterling enthusiasm existed in Durham in those days; the other, that a new comer cannot do better than take to heart, as applicable to the whole country of the present time, the couplet

> But remember, my boys, with a Long Newton fox,
> It won't do to flash when you're up to the hocks.

Darlington, or better still Croft, both outside the country, are the most likely places whence a stranger would see the South Durham hounds in the field—and on their best ground. Croft and its advantages have already been fully told of under the head of the Hurworth Country; and Darlington is the railway junction just north of it, at the meeting-point of the South Durham, Hurworth, and Lord Zetland's.

Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the one week, Monday and Friday only in the next, are days of hunting. Monday is for the east of the country—Sedgefield to the sea; and the leading meet for this side, commanding indeed the whole of it, is Embleton, with Brereton Whin as its first draw. Wolviston, with Noddings Whin (which used to be a great place) takes in most of the south of the same district.

Wednesday is for the north and north-west of Sedgefield, much of the property in this direction being owned by Sir William Eden—who has coverts and plantations and foxes in plenty about Windlestone. Just north of Sedgefield, too, is some good grass

about Trimdon and Fisburn—from Camp Whin to Cole Hill being a capital and frequent line. Near Bradbury, again, is a good place called Coalsides; and Middridge Whin is now held to be the stronghold of the country.

But Friday, as already mentioned, is for the best of the country—the southern corner. Here Bishopton is an especially favourite meet, for Lee Close Gorse; Newbiggin is for famous Fox Hill; and Barmton has always a fox in its whin.

THE WORCESTERSHIRE.*

Not an easy country to hunt is the Worcestershire, with its cold-scenting plough and its numberless coverts. But a good pack of hounds work their way about it three days a week; and all that keen management can do to attain sport is at work with that object.

The Severn runs directly down its centre, from Kidderminster to Worcester; and these two points may be taken as denoting the whereabouts of the country. The northern half of the country, in fact, retains the title of The Worcestershire—the lower half having, for the last nine years, borne the denomination of Lord Coventry's—now The Croome. The Ludlow touches it on the west, the Albrighton—or rather Bewdley—on the north; while the Warwickshire countries border it on the east.

The meadows along the Severn bank are, perhaps, the only grass in the country: the rest (where woodlands leave room) is altogether plough—varying from deep clay to light sand. West of the river, for instance, the district of which Wichenford is about the

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* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 14 and 15, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

centre, belongs entirely to the former variety—being cold clay ground which would seem to repel a scent. Strong thorn fences, cut and laid, as well as a good deal of stout timber, have to be faced in this region; and a powerful horse is needed.

There are fewer coverts hereabouts than in many parts of the country—but those few are in some instances very large, *e.g.*, Ockeridge Wood (Lord Dudley's). Coming northwards to Abberley, however, you will see considerable woodlands; and above Abberley you enter a coal district where little hunting is done. Very rough hilly ground overlooks the river Teme, continuing by Martley up to Shelsley Beauchamp, which should naturally be a thorough fox fastness. On the other side, the east, of the river, from Droitwich northward by Stourport, Hartlebury, &c., to Kidderminster, you will find a thin sandy soil, portioned out only by small easy fences. From Barnt Green downwards along the eastern edge of the country are continual chains and masses of woods. The same cold, but here not bad scenting, clay comes in again about the south-east of the country, between Himbleton and Feckenham—the soil improving somewhat as you near Worcester and reach the Bredicot and Warndon neighbourhood, where the Spetchley Park coverts (Mr. Berkeley's) and the Worcester Woods (Mr. Parker's) always ensures foxes and fair play to the master. On the opposite side of the town of Worcester, again, some good ground is also to be found—the Cotheridge and Doddenham district owning a soil applicable in some parts to hop culture. But it fails too often in the one requisite virtue that might

lead to successful foxhunting; and, in common with too much of West Worcestershire, pays but indifferent attention to reynard's well-being.

Shooting is an element in Worcestershire life that treads not only too closely on the heels of foxhunting, but often on its toes, even on its most sensitive corns. Where foxhunting could best find foothold, there it has often least standing room. On the open ground on either bank of the Severn it has fair play; and there it has to meet the disadvantage of a more than indifferent scent. Along the south-eastern border, however, where the coverts are of easy limit and the soil is more favourable, it has a better chance, as already noted. But there is room enough, and there are coverts enough, in the Worcestershire country for two packs of hounds. There cannot be less, indeed, than twenty thousand acres of woodland—and, if the saying holds true that the worst of land will carry a goose to the acre, surely twenty acres of good woodland should be enough to support a fox. But, as a matter of fact, such is not always found to be the case in Upper Worcestershire. Comparatively few pheasants take up a great deal of ground; and in many very large woods have frightened away the foxes altogether. Yet Worcestershire scarcely aspires to being a great shooting country. The keepers, unfortunately, have for generations been bred too much in-and-in; and take to the trap almost from the cradle. Early initiated to blood, they crave for it ever after, and pass the instinct on to their descendants. The strain that is born to understand and believe that foxes and pheasants may be co-existent, has as yet only been

imported in certain comparatively small domains; and the original breed of fox-killing keeper still remains in strength. Resident proprietors are few in number; and only a certain proportion of these are accustomed to pay much attention to the selection and training of the gentlemen who do them the honour of taking over the arrangement of their shooting parties. Those who hunt, or have ever hunted, at home, befriend the master zealously. The farmers, too, are sworn adherents; walk puppies, hunt as much as the times will allow, and grumble loudly at the supineness of their landlords. But they can do no more. It is only fair to add, however, that shooting has recently grown to be less inimical than formerly—a proof of which is found in the fact that cubhunting can now be carried on in many districts where it used to be absolutely debarred.

The Kennels are at Fearnall Heath, three miles from Worcester; were built by the country some fifteen years ago; and are not only very complete, but are admirably situated on ground sloping in almost every direction. Mr. Frederic Ames is now master for the second time; having taken office again three years ago —previous to which he had held it from 1873 to 1876. Mr. C. Morrell from the Ledbury held it in the interim; and former masters were Lord Queensberry for one year, Mr. Vernon and Mr. Allsopp jointly for four years, Mr. Vernon for two years, the late Col. Clowe, and Hon. Dudley Ward. The Kennel Book goes back to 1846. Immense pains has been taken by Mr. Ames to put the pack on a thorough footing; and, in addition to the help always forthcoming from Lord

Coventry's beautiful pack, he has spared no expense in procuring the assistance of such kennels as the Belvoir, Milton, &c.

The Severn often presents an awkward drawback in the run; for foxes will swim it readily, choosing their place by no means necessarily in accordance with the distribution of the bridges. And, as there is only one bridge existing between Worcester and Stourport, to wit at Holt, it will readily be conceived that the river may frequently be a source of considerable inconvenience. For instance, foxes will often cross from Bishop's Wood to Shrawley — though an intelligent keeper has devised and practised the idea of posting a bevy of school children in skirmishing order on the opposite bank when the former covert is drawn. Bishop's Wood, taken sometimes on a Wednesday, sometimes on a Friday, is one of the nicest coverts in the Hunt, and is the especial care of Mr. Wheeler, who holds its interests intact against all surrounding influences—among which the recent prevalence of trapping constitutes a too prominent evil.

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday being the days of hunting—Monday is given to the south-east of the country, from Worcester to about Grafton Wood. The latter covert and Bow Wood are neutral with The Croome. This district includes the coverts of Round Hill, Goosehill, Broughton Wood (the two last belonging to Mr. Bearcroft, who is a very staunch supporter) and Hanbury (Hanbury Hall being the residence of Mr. Vernon, one of the mainstays of the hunt). Hanbury Forest, it may be mentioned, at one time stretched the whole way from Droitwich to Bristol.

Close to Worcester is Spetchley Park, where Mr. Berkeley has very good coverts; and there are also the Worcester Woods, including Nunnery Wood and Perry Wood, the property of Mr. Parker, who, though no longer a hunting man, preserves most heartily.

Wednesday is the one day derivable from the wide extent of ground lying west of the Severn, where there are such meets as Crown East for Mr. Bramwell's good coverts and Cotheridge (Mr. Berkeley's); Ockeridge Wood and Monk Wood of Lord Dudley's, and Shrawley of Mr. Vernon's. From Holt up to Bewdley Forest, it should be noted is all a comparatively light soil—best when very wet. Towards the Teme, again, it is rough and hilly, as above mentioned. Sapey Bridge is a meet from which they draw the Whitbourne Coverts for a fox. Ham Bridge is for Sir Francis Winnington's coverts; and to the north hounds sometimes get as far as Pensax, and its rough dingles. Bewdley Forest is a kind of No Man's Land —a great rough place, where a pack of hounds might lose itself. It has, indeed, extent enough for a woodland pack of its own, but hounds are seldom seen there.

Friday is for the north and east; and attracts the Birmingham contingent, which goes to make up the field to something larger than its ordinary very limited dimensions. Together with many great woods, this side the country has some open strips, such as the nice tract that surrounds, to a distance of three or four miles, Burrow Hill and Bradley Green. A frequent meet is Woodcote Green, neutral with the

Albrighton. Randans is a great and good woodland, and chains of woods run down the east border—including the Lickey, the Warren, Rough Grounds, Butler's Hill (each being some two or three hundred acres), Fox Lydiate, Pitcher Oak, &c.—Lord Windsor here owning some eight miles of territory, a great proportion of which is woodland.

THE LEDBURY.*

The Ledbury is a long narrow country containing the Malvern Hills, and made up of small parts of the counties of Worcester, Hereford and Gloucester—the combination resulting in a Hunt territory that, comparison avoided, may safely be set down as quite as good as any of its neighbours. For the Ledbury, if in some parts hilly, and in many parts strongly wooded, is not only capital ground for hounds, but can show quite its share of good vale and a full proportion of nice grass.

The steep hogsback of the Malvern Hills (nearly 1500 feet in height) rises on its eastern edge; and the traveller from the Worcester direction, issuing from the tunnel that pierces it, finds himself crossing one of these pleasant grass valleys. Another tunnel, and he is at Ledbury Station, within earshot of the Kennels. The latter, the property of the Hunt, are well placed for working the country; and contain some five-and-forty couple of working hounds, belonging to the Master. Mr. Knowles succeeded Mr. Morrell five years ago; and as that gentleman took

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," sheet 14, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

his hounds with him to The Worcestershire, Mr. Knowles had to get together a pack for himself. A draft from the Belvoir three years since has been of great service to him, while Lord Coventry has helped him greatly in the matter of breeding; and altogether, the pack—which, by the way, he hunts himself—has come forward wonderfully in so short a time. It may be added that previous to Mr. Morrell's five years' mastership, Mr. Talbot had the country for three seasons; Mr. Thackwell of Dymock for nineteen before that—succeeding Mr. Giles, who is still alive, and who was a very successful master for many years. Thus the country has had a regular establishment for some fifty years; before which a trencher-fed pack was for a long time in existence.

Though there are many very strong woodlands in the country, these are so distributed that a fox, once away from them, has every opportunity of setting his head across a district of good open country. And thus wood and vale—or, in its place, open hill—alternate throughout. For instance, commencing in the north, the Suckley Woods are backed by a stretch of nice vale between the Cradley Brook and the River Froome. The Suckley Hills are a northern continuation of the Malvern; and are nearly smothered in covert—being able to show some seven hundred acres of almost continuous wood, extending to Knightwich on the border of the country. Behind these, from Knightwich west to Bromyard, and from Bromyard south to Bishops Froome or further, is a deep clay vale, plough and grass intermingled—the latter predominating as you work southward. The western boundary, by

the way, is the road not the river (as in Stanford's map) from Bishops Froome to Bromyard. Below Bishops Froome the ground gets more undulating, though still open and rideable enough. Beacon Hill is an excellent covert in this tract of country. It is a narrow wood of horseshoe shape, perhaps a hundred acres in all, belonging to Mr. Higgins, who owns a great deal of land in the neighbourhood; and who, though no longer able to hunt in person, gives his best sympathies and support to those who do. Some few brooks run across this upper country — the Leddon and the Cradley being the two most frequently met with. The former can be jumped in some places and forded in others; and the Cradley brook is to be got over, or through, almost anywhere. Often foxes will run into the North Herefordshire country—for instance, to the great earths at Hall Court, the seat of Major Browne, Master of the North Staffordshire—and on the way will cross the River Froome, which is of most unjumpable dimensions. Again, foxes found below the Malverns are as likely as not to make straight for the hill, under the delusive idea that safety may be found on its summit. The result, on the contrary, is almost invariably their death; for the hill top is absolutely without covert, and there are but few spots where they can get to ground. Anyone who has seen the Malverns will readily understand that on such occasions fox and hounds are likely to have ample time to settle the question between themselves, before the field can in any way intrude; for the progress of a horseman up the hillside must be about as rapid as that of a fly up a window pane. Once he has reached the summit, he

has first to give his steed time to breathe, then to learn, or guess, which direction hounds may have taken—before he can avail himself of the smooth grassy surface to set going again. There is always a tremendous scent on this velvety upland, and never a fence to check horse or hound; so, if a man can but be there in time, he may see reynard wound up to a very rapid tune.

Leaving this northern country, which furnishes one day a week (Wednesday), we get towards the Kennels —within two miles of which are Hope End Woods, the property of Mr. Hewitt, who, too, though not a hunting man, is a staunch friend to foxes. Indeed, the Ledbury is altogether a very well-preserved country, which gives it an advantage impossible to over-estimate, where deep and extensive woodlands have to be drawn. The worst of countries is good enough if hounds are always running: a bad country without foxes is purgatory. But the Ledbury is more than a fair country, with plenty of foxes. Those found at Hope End may cross the strip of green vale, above alluded to as between the two tunnels, and breast the steep side of Malvern, or else may move on into the woodland which surrounds Lord Somers' place, Eastnor Castle. (Frith Wood comes down to the Kennel wall, and surmounts the tunnel that debouches at Ledbury Station).

The Eastnor Woods alone require hunting quite once a fortnight; for, though by no means of unmanageable size, they are wonderfully attractive to foxes. Thus many a good traveller finds his way thither from the open country westward, or even from

the great coverts on Marcle Hill—some six or seven miles away on the South Herefordshire border. Little else but grass is to be crossed between the two points; and a prettier gallop need not be wished for than a Marcle Hill fox will furnish as he travels homewards from Eastnor Park. Good hedge and ditch fences leaven the plain, which here too is a strong clay. The hedges are thick and well grown, but seldom strongly "laid" as in the Shires; and, though they are rarely on banks, but as a rule come under the denomination of "flying fences," it is better that a horse should take them steadily than at a rush. Hazel is just as frequent as thorn; and both grow in such a manner as often to allow a hunter to minimise his effort by dropping his legs in their midst. Timber is freely used in mending the gaps; and stiles are especially numerous. A stout clever horse, that can jump well and is ready to jump under all circumstances, that can go through dirt and go up hill, is the animal to ride with the Ledbury. What is termed a "fashionable" long striding horse, is scarcely in his place here.

The ridge of the Marcle Hills is again the true boundary between the Ledbury and the South Hereford; and twixt this and the Kennels is about the area of the good scenting and good riding ground just described. Immediately south of the Kennels, however, towards Redmarley, you will find yourself on a very different soil, light and sandy—a district that has earned for itself the title of "The Ryelands," signifying land that is not good enough to grow wheat. The fences here are very small; and scent is seldom

good except after recent heavy rain. Many litters are every year bred in this neighbourhood—the vixens finding it easy enough to draw any rabbit hole as an earth, in the light soil of its banks.

Just south of it commence the great chain of woodlands which extend right to the limit of the Ledbury country, and far beyond into the Forest of Dean. Beginning with the Dymock Woods, a ten-mile range of woodland goes on along the slope of the hill with Queen's Wood, the Linton Woods, Aston Ingham and the Newent Woods; while at Huntley Major Probyn has more great coverts, reaching to the Forest of Dean—the rough depths of which are seldom visited by any hounds.

Turning again from rough to smooth, we find ourselves in the third section of the Ledbury Country—from Malvern to Gloucester along the Severnside. And this forms the Friday country—Monday being for the district just described, from the Kennels to the edge of the Forest. Crossing over the Malvern Hills you get on to a low vale that in many parts is almost entirely level grass. The coverts are much smaller; but foxes are always to be found; scent lies well; and altogether the Friday country is held to be about the cream of the Hunt. Commencing at Hanley Swan and Upton, where it meets The Croome Country, it extends along the west bank of the Severn, by Tewkesbury and Gloucester, down to Westbury. Not only do several brooks intersect the vale—such for instance as the Chaceley Brook—but "rheins" and "commission ditches" make still further calls upon a water jumper. *Rhein,* though not, as far as I can

learn, a dictionary word, is a Gloucestershire term for an open drain; while a "commission ditch" is a similar cutting under the system of the Land Drainage Commission. All these varieties take a great deal of jumping; and demand a bold horse—the ground at the same time calling for a well-bred one. The Longdon Vale is perhaps the best sample of this side, the country being all flat, nearly all grass, and fenced chiefly with these commission ditches. Of coverts there are no better instances than those of Mr. Dowdeswell at Pull Court, and the Sarnhill Coverts. Similar ground extends to Eldersfield. Below this is Corse Grove—a small hill surrounded by a belt of covert, belonging part to Lord Coventry and part to Mr. Baker, of Hasfield, and of great value to the Hunt. By Gloucester the vale continues, a fine hunting country; but as you turn westward to Newent, you find yourself once more approaching rough ground.

Some of the chief meets on the three hunting days are as follows: On a Monday the Somers Arms, Eastnor, is usually fixed for Lord Somers' coverts; the Pheasant Inn, Welland, for The Stank; The Kennels for Frith Wood, Wall Hills and Paunceford; Hope End for Hope End Coverts and Coddington; Payford Bridge (which may sometimes also be fixed for a Friday) for the coverts at Colin Park (Mr. F. Ricardo) and numerous other safe draws. The Dymock Woods, Aston Ingham, &c., are taken on a Monday, and often on a byeday as well.

On a Wednesday, north of the Kennels, are Bosbury for Beacon Hill, Poor's Wood, and various small coverts round; Cradley New Church, for the big

woods of the Suckley Hills (the rides of which, by the way, once very deep, are said to have been considerably improved of late); Acton, for the Church House coverts and Evesbatch; and Ridgeway Cross for Riley Hill (a covert that is very well cared for by Mr. Trinder).

On a Friday is Long Green, near Tewkesbury, for Sarnhill, from which many of the best of their runs have originated; the Duke of York for Berrow Wood, another very favourite little stronghold in the middle of the choicest country, and with no other covert within some two or three miles. This, too, is a small hill with coverts round three sides of it, so that foxes can find shelter against the wind from any direction—and appreciate it accordingly. The Canning Arms, Hartspury, near Gloucester, is the meet for Mr. Gordon Canning's small but good coverts, Limbury for instance: and High Leaden Green for Mr. Gambier-Parry's woods at Higham.

In conclusion, the largest fields that go out with Mr. Knowles are when he meets on the Gloucester side. But a fair muster is always seen with the Ledbury on Mondays and Fridays. There are not a great number of resident gentlemen in the country to take part in the Hunt; but the farmers are not only numerously represented, but are all excellent friends to the sport.

THE SOUTH HEREFORDSHIRE.*

The division of the Herefordshire into North and South, and the various changes which led up to the two countries being placed on their present bases, and under present Mastership, have been already traced in a sketch of the North Herefordshire. The two together certainly do not make up too much ground for a single Hunt; and the city of Hereford seems the natural and practical base from which a pack of hounds should easily command the whole—for scarcely a meet in either sub-division is more than thirteen miles distant, as a crow would fly from the cathedral towers. But it has been found more convenient to keep two separate packs going—each undertaking two days a week. Accordingly Hereford marks the point of demarcation instead of remaining as a centre, and Mr. J. Rankin, M.P. for Leominster—succeeding Capt. Lewis and Capt. Helme, who were Masters for two and five years respectively—maintains a pack at his beautiful place Bryngwyn, some six miles south of the capital of the county. The first local name to be written has about it an air and a ring that at once suggest the propinquity

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Vide Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 14, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

of Wales. And, true enough, the Black Monntain of Brecknockshire almost overlooks the South Herefordshire frontier; and the extreme western border of the country closely verges on the mountainous. But throughout the length and breadth of South Herefordshire hill and woodland are strongly represented. Steep and lofty ridges ride the country in every direction—their wooded sides in several instances forming a continuous covert for miles. At their base, however, there is often room enough for a fox to set his head over level ground for miles; and if he will only choose his way propitiously he need have no difficulty in leading the pursuit on pleasant lines. This is notably the case at the foot of Marcle Hills, a trip eastward from which or from Peristone Hill may be over the grass into the Ledbury country; or, more at home, from Garway Hill, Saddlebow Hill, &c., over the Harewood and Trebandy vale—perhaps the best of the South Hereford domain. Or, again—North of Callow Hill, Allensmoor, &c., is a nice vale of mixed grass and plough stretching up the Wye side from Hereford to the Stockley Hills in the far north-west. A fox traversing the latter vale may very likely be prompted to cross the above river into North Herefordshire territory—though he may find quite half a dozen miles of fair playground within the border, and Belmont gives him every opportunity of seeking a substitute, or a fresh start, before he leaves the home country. 'Twixt Aconbury, the Bryngwyn Woods, or Saddlebow Hill, and the opposite hill-coverts of Thruxton Valletts, &c., is a neat, closely fenced, valley, of which — unfortunately — the London and North-

Western Railway takes advantage, and which contains a better proportion of grass than is to be found elsewhere.

The strongest champion of the South Herefordshire will scarcely proclaim it to be a fine scenting country. Most of it—especially on the hills—is a heavy clay soil, carrying usually a weak and indifferent scent. On the grass, where it occurs, hounds have always a better chance; but there is a greal deal more tillage than turf throughout the country. The southern plain, best known as the Trebandy Vale, is the most favourite hunting ground. It requires a good deal of wet to show it to advantage, and then hounds frequently run well over a deep and strongly fenced flat, where only a small covert or two is to be met for some miles. The hedges are not of an unbending, turnover, class; but they are closely placed and strongly grown, all over the lower country, and seldom fail to have the protection of a ditch of respectable dimensions. A horse taught over Herefordshire is pretty sure to be able to take care of himself anywhere—even though he need not necessarily be imbued with the dash and stride to make him a first-flight hunter in the midlands. Yet that he could not well be educated in a better school has been shown by many a Herefordshire-bred horse, when transplanted to "fresh fields and pastures new." He has here every necessity and every variety of jumping; every opportunity of learning; and little reason, if properly ridden, to maim or frighten himself. The same thorn-and-hazel hedges; timber, in odd corners, in gaps and footways; occasional brooks, intricate dingles—these,

as in North Hereford, form the bulk of the difficulties he must learn to surmount, and, as there, determine for himself whether he shall trust to his power of spring or to his aptitude for creeping and doubling.

A hound for South Herefordshire must, above all virtues of fashion or appearance, possess a keen nose, strong perseverance, and an untiring appetite for work—to enable him to pick out a cold scent, to drive through big woodlands, and to grapple with severe hills. Mr. Rankin's pack, of some thirty-two couples, owes its origin to sources distinguished for their working qualities, such as the Oakley, Milton, Pytchley, and Bramham Moor. It has of late depended for its breeding on home blood, crossed with the Ledbury, North Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Llangibby, Old Berkeley, Sir W. W. Wynn's, and others.

Pursuing the geography of the country, it may be noted that between Hereford and the Marcle Hills is all a rough, hilly, and wooded country. About Mordiford, for instance, there is a good deal of woodland, the property of Captain Hereford. Down either side of the Wye hill coverts continue in rapid succession. The Woolhope district is much of this type; and from Holm-Lacey, by Aconbury, and the Warren, to the Kennels is almost a chain of hilly woodland. From Stoke Edith, the residence of Lady Emily Foley, a string of great coverts follows the line of the Marcle Hills to Peristone, the latter being the starting-point of many a good run. The Marcle Hill coverts are also the property of Her Ladyship; and foxes are alwavs plentiful. The broad rides of the

Stoke Edith Woods run on a white clay, which never gets soft even in the wettest weather; and they form the best of coverts for cubhunting. On the other side of the country, the coverts of Whitfield (Major Clive's), and the Mynd (Mr. Lutwyche's), answer similar purposes; and are also always looked upon as great strongholds; and most of the country may lay claim to being well preserved.

The South Herefordshire seldom muster anything approaching a large field; but sometimes as many as eighty, or even a hundred horsemen, may be seen out in the Harewood and Trebandy Vale.

Tuesday and Friday are Mr. Rankin's hunting days —the usual custom being to take the western half of the country on the former day, the eastern on the Friday. The opening meet is at the Master's place, Bryngwyn, where a strong wood covers the hillside behind the house, and several great coverts of Mr. Lutwyche's extend beyond. To push a fox from these hilly fastnesses is always a matter of difficulty, though the last season or two has seen them leave more freely. At Abbey Dore are very big and strong coverts of Capt. Lewis's, whence a fox can either cleave to the rough hills of the neighbourhood or dip into the strip of vale containing the railroad. Whitfield is the meet for Thruxton Valletts and the extensive and deep-rided coverts round. Lower Eaton points to Ruckhall, and the smaller coverts by the river Wye. These as well as Belmont, are the property of Mr. Wegg Prosser. The latter place, only just outside Hereford is constantly productive of good runs, for it is staunchly preserved; it lies in the midst of the open ground, and

there is nothing to prevent a fox travelling thence right away to the Stockley Hills. Bacton is a common meet for the rough country in the direction of the Black Mountain, and Batchow Hill is generally fixed for the Stockley heights.

On a Friday, Aconbury is often named, with a view to the mass of hill coverts of which it is about the centre and most prominent part; and Little Dewchurch is the meet for Athelstane Wood. Holm Lacey, where the extensive coverts are well cared for, belongs to Sir Henry Stanhope, Bart. Over the river is Mordiford for the Sufton coverts (Capt. Hereford's); and Stoke Edith, of course, for the beautiful woods on the hills above described. Woolhope is the rendezvous for that district; while in the open, and what is generally held to be the best, country to the south, Harewood Lodge is fixed for the small Harewood coverts. There is little, if anything, to be drawn between here and the Trebandy and Bernithen Woods, neither of which are of any great size. Trebandy House, the seat of Mr. Bullock, who is a good friend to foxes, is the ordinary fixture for the two latter. St. Weonard's is another meet on the edge of this vale; and may lead to either the upper or lower ground.

THE SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE.*

A LOAN from the Meynell and another from the Atherstone make up the little country which the present Marquis of Anglesey originally formed, and Major Browne has carried on, as The South Staffordshire. Lichfield is its central-point; and its area is from Birmingham northwards to the river Trent, from Tamworth and the river Tame westward to Walsall and its coalpits. The Albrighton and the North Warwickshire bound it (or where railways and ironworks obliterate hunting, approach it) on the west and south. The northern half of the country is lent by the Meynell; the other half, south of Lichfield, by the Atherstone. The former includes the wild slopes of Cannock Chase, and the deep flat of Black Slough (between Lichfield and the Trent, and rightly so named); the latter takes in Sutton Coldfield, its great common-park (best known in connection with the new Four Oaks Club and Racecourse adjoining), and several fine sporting estates, belonging to resident gentlemen who throw their best interests into the support of foxhunting. South Staffordshire is, indeed,

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Vide Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 8 and 9, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

singularly blessed in this respect. It has an unusual number of resident and well-wishing landowners; and since a local pack has been set on foot, foxes have increased from year to year, till now the country may be regarded as exceptionally well-preserved and well-stocked.

Cannock Chase virtually occupies quite a quarter of Major Browne's huntable ground. Commencing at Shugborough Park (the seat of Lord Lichfield), at the junction of the Sow and the Trent, it stretches inwards from the north-west past Rugeley and Beaudesert (Lord Anglesey's place) for an extent of six or eight miles. Much of it has in recent time been inclosed and in some degree cultivated, and year by year its expanse becomes more curtailed. But still there exists a long broad tract of wild open ground, whose sweeping slopes own to no richer produce than heather and bramble. The great mass of covert has long disappeared, and only a copse is to be seen here and there. Thus, hounds are always under the eye of the huntsman; and men who love hunting for hunting's sake can find plenty to interest them in a run on the Chase. There is nothing to ride over—unless you except ruts and rabbit holes—and there is not always a scent. So it is needless to say it is not altogether favourite ground with the multitude. The colliers have a way of firing the heather as the freak seizes them. The newly burnt surface of course sends hounds' noses up at once; but where the burning has taken place long enough ago to allow of the new grass and heather again springing through, there is often a brilliant scent. The soil of the Chase being

light and gravelly calls for a great deal of wet to make it carry a scent consistently. But foxes approve thoroughly of a wild tract, where they are not only left alone and encouraged, but where they can readily turn any rabbit hole into a breeding earth. This very facility to them is a proportionate difficulty to those who undertake their pursuit; for complete and effectual earthstopping is almost out of the question —though Mr. Martin, the head forester of Beaudesert, works most energetically over the whole district to get the subject mastered. In spite of all his efforts, as many as six foxes have been run to ground in a day on the Chase—in almost all instances in earths previously undiscovered. Many a good gallop, however, is to be seen there; and a horse accustomed to it learns wonderfully how to keep his feet clear of the traps underfoot. A pet playground of Boreas is Cannock Chase; and, with a scent or without, he can drive across it with a vigour that has to be felt to be appreciated.

Though the Chase has little covert, beyond heather, on its hilly surface, there are plenty of large woods just below on every side—notably those of Beaudesert, Wolseley (Sir Charles Wolseley's), Shugborough, Teddesley (Lord Hatherton's), and Hatherton (also the property of Lord Hatherton, but occupied by Sir C. Clifford). And these coverts are probably much better for cubhunting than the Chase itself, on which a cub will travel for miles as gaily as an old fox.

The rest of the South Staffordshire Country, with the single exception of the Weeford Hills (of which

hereafter), is pretty level; and, though almost all plough, is good riding. Almost the only heavy ground is the Black Slough district—the remainder of that part of the country borrowed from The Meynell, and just north of Lichfield. This is flat and often very deep; and takes some getting over, though rideable enough everywhere. It is quite open, and carries a better scent than the rest of the country. There are some nice coverts scattered about, though there are no large woods. About Alrewas, for instance, there is Alrewas Hay and Brook Hay, &c. (the property of Lord Lichfield); and at Elmhurst (recently bought by Mr. Fox, the noted shorthorn breeder) is a very useful covert called Tom Hay. Good sport is to be had in this neighbourhood; and foxes are wild and strong, as they are everywhere in the South Staffordshire Country.

South of Lichfield is the territory lent by the Atherstone—sporting ground, with ample but very manageable coverts and plenty of foxes. The soil is light; the fences are very pretty riding; and on a good scenting day you may swing along for miles, taking everything as it comes. The fences are easy brush hedges, of thorn that is trimmed as it grows. Very often there is no ditch; and seldom is there a very formidable one. Timber is very little used; and brooks are rarely encountered. From Barr to Aston, across the flat, offers a very fair sample of a ride with The South Staffordshire. As already stated, theirs is not a consistently good scenting country; but when they have a scent at all, it is generally a fierce one, on which hounds can run like wildfire.

They scarcely know what it is to find themselves in a grass field—a few acres of freshgrown seeds forming the nearest approach to the luxury. So it will readily be understood that nine days out of ten, hounds must put their noses down, and keep them there from find to finish. Such a thing as lifting them for a flying cast is a liberty altogether out of the question; and they must at all times be left to work their own way through difficulties. They seldom — save on exceptional scenting days—find it possible to press their fox; who, on his part—true to his wild nature and breeding—is ever travelling onwards, and doing all he can to increase the distance between him and them. In some countries, especially where big woods prevail, a fox will often avail himself of a bad scenting day to lie up in covert, and wait there till hounds have nearly reached him. He thus contrives to forfeit all advantage he may have gained, and very likely pays forfeit with a life he might easily have saved. But a Staffordshire fox seldom throws away his chance thus. He generally knows a lot of country; and will go steadily on through it, till he is either brought to hand or has run his enemies fairly out of scent.

On the Birmingham side, the place of any importance that is farthest from the Kennels and nearest that town is Great Barr Hall, the seat of Sir Arthur Scott, who has most useful and well-preserved little coverts in his park. The same light soil and pleasant easy fences mark all this neighbourhood. A trifle nearer home is Sutton Park, a great place belonging to the town of Sutton Coldfield — apparently a kind of common-land free to the townspeople. Whatever the

common rights may be, they do not at all events include the slaughter of foxes—who, on the contrary, have an excellent time of it there. The land within the radius of the park is roughly and partially inclosed —like many parts of the New Forest—and contains many patches of rough covert. Lady Wood is perhaps the best piece; and it always holds a litter. Aston Hall—the property of the Hon. Parker Jervis, whose son acts as secretary to the Hunt—is the next place of note; and here again are more small thin plantation-coverts, holding many foxes. Middleton Hall has always been held to provide a sure find when in the hands of Mr. Hanbury-Barclay; and Mr. Manley's coverts at Manley Hall have the advantage of a good sportsman as their owner. At Weeford you get to the Weeford Hills, strong undulations covered with very light and indifferent plough: and from Hints Hill (just taken by a good preserver from the Atherstone) a fox may either run upwards on to this light ground of the Weeford Hills, or take across the flat to the large woodland of Hopwas, now occupied by Mr. Fisher of Packington Hall. The last-named wood is a good nursery for foxes, and a good school for cubhunting. Freeford (Col. Dyott's) is the usual meet after the Hunt Ball; and Freeford Pool always furnishes a good wild fox. The east of the country has, indeed, plenty of coverts to draw. Fotherley Rough, belonging to Col. Bagnall of Shenstone, provides foxes on all occasions, and was last season the source of a great run of four hours ending in a kill. Just about here the ground improves for hunting, if for a while deeper and stiffer for riding.

During a run over it, some loose horses are generally to be seen. A distant corner of the country not yet mentioned is Ingestre, the seat of Lord Shrewsbury, the coverts of which were until late years drawn by the North Staffordshire. A gallop from here may lead over some nice grass either into the Meynell or the North Staffordshire.

Major Browne bought his pack originally from Lord Anglesey, on the retirement of the latter nine years ago after a mastership of five seasons. Since then he has replenished them from various sources; and is this summer fortunate enough to be bringing into work some very promising young hounds by Lord Coventry's well-known veteran Rambler. The pack (now a little over thirty couple) is kennelled at Major Browne's hunting box at Fosseway, some three miles from Lichfield—the latter place, be it mentioned, being about three hours' journey from London by L. and N. W. Railway (Euston Station). A moderately large field generally turns out, except on the Chase: while meets in the Birmingham district are always largely attended.

The days of hunting are Tuesday and Friday, with a byeday about once a fortnight. The southern, or Birmingham half of the country is as a rule taken on a Tuesday. Bassett's Pole is the usual opening meet, with a view to the Middleton coverts — Trickley Coppice, New Park, &c., the shooting of which has for the last two seasons been rented by Mr. Foster of Canwell Hall, and every care taken of the foxes. Blackbrook Bridge or Weeford Tollbar is the meet for Hints Hall and neighbourhood: and other frequent

and favourite meets are Aston Hall, Freeford Hall, and Hopwas Bridge.

On a Friday, Pottle Pool is fixed for the Teddesley coverts — Lord Hatherton himself being as keen a sportsman as he is a guardian of foxes. Perhaps the best coverts on this side are those at Hatherton, also belonging to his lordship, but in the tenancy of Sir C. Clifford. These are woods of some size, adjoining the Albrighton country; and the meet for them is generally Manstey Tollbar. Shugborough Lodge is advertised for one end of the Chase, and Beaudesert for the other. Lord Anglesey, it is almost needless to say, supports the Hunt as strongly now as in the days when he himself first called it into existence. Wolseley Bridge is also for the Chace; and Alrewas is a common meet for the Black Slough.

THE NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE.*

On the West of the Derbyshire Hills—having The Cheshire on the north of it and The Albrighton—on the south—is, roughly speaking, the position of The North Staffordshire. The London and North-Western Railway, between the two extreme points of Crewe and Stafford, cuts through the whole length of its huntable ground, and no less than four other countries touch its borders, to wit, Sir Watkin Wynn's and The Shropshire on the west and The Meynell and South Staffordshire on the south-east. It looks a large country on the map; but the industries of coal, iron and pottery cut into its very heart, to clothe in factories and chimnies, and to cloud in smoke and dust, a full third of its extent. From Stoke and Newcastle-under-Lyme, north and north-west, a teeming mass of population is employed at whichever of these branches of labour individuals and families may have been born to—over a ten or fifteen mile area that by the map would appear to be hunted. The Derbyshire hills and moors, again, hem the country in, where an opening would seem to be left

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 8, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

on the west, between the manufacturing district and The Meynell. The steep grassy slopes and lofty moorlands (the former fenced, as throughout Derbyshire, with high stonewalls) are almost at once impracticable for foxhounds—or at all events for their followers. The same bleak hills roll away thus over half the county of Derby, till at length they begin to melt down where Lord Fitzwilliam and The Rufford once more take up the thread of foxhunting. In this wild unhunted space Buxton is the only name of note —a refuge whither many a crippled and gouty sportsman flies to fit himself for the saddle or the gun.

It is only the strength and size of their woods that allow of the North Staffordshire being a four-day-a-week country. A great mass of coverts occupy its centre and south-west. Foxes are thoroughly preserved everywhere; and are as wild and strong as they are plentiful. The country, too,—unlike the South Staffordshire—carries an excellent scent everywhere (excepting, perhaps, some very few coverts). It is thus a very favourable one for hounds; and in many parts a very charming one for riders—both sections of pursuers making full capital out of the green covering with which most of the open ground is clad.

The country, then, may be thus described, as we traverse it from west to east—ignoring altogether the brick-and-water-and-smoke area above Stoke, and bearing in mind that hounds only cross the Stoke-and-Uttoxeter railway for a couple of meets at the foot of the Derbyshire hills. The western edge—from Crewe down to Market Drayton and as far inwards, say, as

Woore—is entirely what we are accustomed to look upon as Cheshire type, viz., dairy farms, small inclosures, level ground, deep soil, and fair hedge-and-ditch fences (sometimes with the hedge set on a low bank). Without there being any distinction, there is this little difference in the fences as you ride into North Staffordshire—High farming seems to grow out of fashion, hedges are less neatly kept, and ditches are more seldom cleaned out. But, if the hedges are ragged and the ditches are blind, they present no essential change; and the same horse that carries you with The Cheshire or Sir Watkin should do equally well with The North Staffordshire—though both he and his rider may be called upon to exercise discretion and discernment in an even fuller degree with the last named. Most of this district, indeed, belongs to the counties of Chester and Salop; and the same fine scenting grass, the same constant jumping in and out, the same deep soil, the same bursting gallops, and the same large fields of competing horsemen, may be expected to prevail with the North Staffordshire as with the other two packs. A quick active horse that will take his fences steadily, and that does not easily tire — summarises briefly what has already been noted at length as a desirable mount for such country. Water is not so frequently offering itself here as over the border, though it is certainly necessary that a horse should be ready to face it. Timber he will not often be called upon to surmount, for the double reason that it is not by any means lavishly used, and that when met with it is easily and, it may almost be said usually

avoided, in favour of a fence of less obdurate nature. For it must be remembered that a strong post and rails seldom represents here the only possible outlet from a field—as it often does in some other countries, where fences, themselves impracticable, have their gaps mended up with sturdy timber, and this alone gives a chance of escape from an otherwise secure imprisonment. A Cheshire fence, on the contrary, is seldom unjumpable at all, and generally fairly practicable everywhere. Even if it secures you a fall, it is one of a nature very different, both in present sensation and subsequent afterthought, to the somersault over high rails. The one probably induces only a wholesome contempt and a satisfactory increase in the self confidence that makes a man ride straight for pleasure. The other is likely to be detrimental at the time and harmful in the future—engendering a lively distrust in horseflesh, and a dislike of rash experiment, that is all against a man's further reputation or enjoyment. Everybody does not put it to himself in this fashion; but a good many act upon a similar course of reasoning—the result being, with most men of experience, that the majority only take timber for choice when quite assured that they have a timber-jumper under them—the rest go round to avoid it.

But to continue. This outer vale is pretty well-off for coverts, though a few gorses distributed here and there would prove of great service in filling up occasional voids. There are, for instance, good coverts at Doddington (Mr. Broughton's), which are noted for foxes. Also in the neighbourhood of Woore there are several, to wit, the hazel woods of Mill Hay and Can-

riden, also Admiral's Gorse (no longer gorse, but oak scrub), Arrows Wood, and Checkley Wood—the last being a strong, holding covert, with Wrine Hill only a few fields away. Towards Adderley—Mr. Corbett's own place, the right of drawing which was surrendered by the North Staffordshire on the occasion of his dividing The Cheshire country with Capt. Park Yates —we come to Bruerton Gorse (again no actual gorse), which provided a fox weekly throughout all the latter half of last season. Mr. Corbett has made for the N. S. a very nice gorse covert at Highfield. Sir George Chetwood also has plenty of foxes at Oakley Hall, and they are equally numerous at Betton Hall (Mr. Norcop's).

Leaving this Cheshire and Shropshire vale, you find the ground at once begin to rise as you move eastward; and so it continues to rise until the hills of Derbyshire are reached. The same style of grass culture either already extends, or is gradually creeping into vogue, across the country, till it blends with a similar class of farming in southern Derbyshire. On certain hills below the Kennels at Trentham there is still some little plough of a light description; but as a rule dairy-farming is found to be preferable to corn growing, and year by year more arable has given way to grass —till now nearly all the North Staffordshire hunting ground is laid down with turf. Thus round the big woods which we now reach, grass is generally found. These great coverts lie upon, or between, ridges of hills running north and south; and occupy, in broken periods, an extent of country some ten miles square— commencing at Madeley and Trentham and reaching

southward, virtually to Market Drayton and Eccleshall. Some idea of their extent may be given by noting that two of them, Burnt Wood and Bishop's Wood, in themselves are said to attain to about eight hundred and eleven hundred acres respectively. Mrs. Meynell has a large estate at and near Willowbridge, in which the woods of Astley Heath and part of Burnt Wood are included. The manor of Madeley (the residence of Mr. Stanyer) is very rough and hilly, and has many large coverts. Maer Hall (Mr. Davenport's) adjoins with similar woods. Swinnerton Old Park is an enormous tract of ground nearly all spread over with covert (shrub, heather, and bilberry bushes), and is part of the Swinnerton Hall property—the Hall itself, where Mr. Fitzherbert resides, being at some little distance. These woods are—thanks to their owners—very well off for foxes of the best and strongest kind; and, it is needless to say, form extensive and valuable ground, not only as a schoolroom for foxhounds, but as a nursery for foxes. The Duke of Sutherland's home coverts at Trentham range along steep hillsides to join the chain; and swarm with foxes. All the immediate neighbourhood of the Kennel is, in a word, broken, hilly and woodland.

Below Swinnerton again—*i.e.*, between Eccleshall and Sandon, in the south—is a nice country, much flatter, and having as coverts only some few osier beds and gorses. Plough and grass intermix here; and both are rather deep as the neighbourhood of Stafford is approached.

Crossing over the Trent, we find another line of hills running nearly north and south between Longton and

Sandon, with several coverts of considerable size. From Draycott Wood, it may be instanced, hounds last season ran a fifteen-mile point, killing near the town of Lichfield. The Hiddlestone district is very much the same class—perhaps in some respects rather better: and most of the soil is laid down in grass. At the foot of the Derbyshire Hills they get as far as Croxden Abbey, and may run up to Alton Towers; while Dilhorn (Sir M. Buller's) is the most northerly meet on this border tract of stone walls and steep grass slopes.

The Marquis of Stafford took over the Mastership of the Hunt seven years ago from Capt. Nugent and the late Earl of Shrewsbury, who for five seasons had been joint Masters. Before them Mr. Davenport had held office for many years, following upon Mr. Wicksted. Taking the whole pack as a foundation, Lord Stafford has built the present one mainly by the help of The Blankney, The Bramham Moor, and The Brocklesby —the present result being some sixty couple of working hounds conspicuous for quality and with a full allowance of strength. The Kennels at Trentham are splendid and well arranged buildings, quite in keeping with the magnificence of the ducal residence to which they adjoin.

Great numbers of people attend the covertside on popular days—notably, for instance, on a Wednesday in the Wooze district, when the Cheshire and Manchester men appear in force. Not so much on account of the number of horsemen, but to escape the crowd of colliers who are keenly alive to the delights of overrunning and damaging the coverts of the Hunt

and the crops and fences of the farmers, it was last year decided to discontinue advertising the meets; and the fixtures are now only circulated by card. In the south of the country and in the woodlands the fields are naturally very much smaller; but the favourite and more convenient meets show how strong a body is the North Staffordshire Hunt. Where there are so many industries and factories there must be wealth; and where wealth can find so attractive an outlet as joining a good pack of hounds in a good country, small wonder that *dives* takes to hunting the fox. Thus, what with townsmen and county-men, Lord Stafford has a very strong following indeed.

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday being the days of hunting—Monday is usually for the strong coverts not far from home, Wednesday for the Cheshire side, Friday and Saturday for the rest of the country, south and south-east of the Kennels. Among the Monday meets are The Kennels or Trentham Hall, for the Trentham coverts; Stapleford Bridge or Swinnerton Hall for Swinnerton Old Park; Loggerhead for the big woodlands of Burnt Wood and Bishops Wood; while on the edge of the country, adjoining The Shropshire and Albrighton, is a meet at Cheswardine, for Chipnall Wood and a gorse or two, with the great woods again for the afternoon.

Wednesday has recently been arranged instead of Friday for the west of the country, so that the members of both Hunts—The Cheshire and North Staffordshire—can avail themselves of a day with each pack. Some three meets take in the whole of this side, viz., Doddington and Woore, for the coverts

near either; and Norton-in-Hales, a railway station that is handy when Betton Oakley, Highfield Gorse, &c., are to be drawn. For the last-named covert Adderley is also occasionally fixed. There is also a meet at Weston, close to Crewe, for the far north-west of the country, which brings them back by Mill Dale (a straggling brookside dingle). Betley Hall must be added, as a prominent Wednesday fixture. It is the residence of Mr. Wicksted, who has some excellent coverts—a gorse, belts of plantation, and a wood called Balterley Heath.

On a Friday or a Saturday they hunt the stone line of hills, above alluded to; or go across to Draycott and the Derbyshire side. Thus they have Stoke-by-Stone, for some small woods thereabouts; and Sandon for more little coverts, whence they are likely to run to Chartley Park in the Meynell territory or else back to Orange Hayes near Stone. Moddershall Oaks is famous for foxes, and the meet is Moddershall itself. Seighford, close to Stafford, has about a score of small coverts and a pleasant country about it. Norton Bridge is for Chebsey Rough and Shallowford Gorse. Johnson Hall, close to Eccleshall, means Wyncote Wood on the border next The Albrighton. Beyond the Stoke and Uttoxeter railway are Dilhorn, for the extensive coverts there; Draycott Village for Draycott Cross and Cheadell Common; and Croxden Abbey as the farthest point in the hills. Finally, the northern-most place of meeting between the Kennels and the collieries is Keele, where there are some good woods and the Madeley coverts.

THE DUKE OF BEAUFORT'S.*

QUITE one of the leading countries of England is The Badminton, which for several generations has been maintained by the Dukes of Beaufort in true princely fashion. An immense area is as thoroughly hunted as it is, in return, staunchly preserved. From Bath to Cirencester—thirty miles as the crow flies—is a fair diameter, by no means in excess of the distance across country between several other extreme points. No wonder that in this extent there is room for five days a week from early autumn to latest spring; that there is suitable and ample ground for cub-hunting, while in other parts a May fox may be killed with impunity; that nearly every variety of country is to be met with; or that the Duke's followers are to a man fond and proud of their hunt. The relations between the Duke and his field are marked by a cordial regard and mutual reliance, giving him a hold upon his following such as no mere sense of gratitude for his liberality could of itself effect, great as is their debt to him in this respect. His Grace bears on

* *Vide* Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas, or the Pocket Map of Badminton Hunt, by Houlston and Sons, Paternoster-buildings, and of High-street, Chippenham.

himself the whole cost of a hunt establishment, which has no superior in the three kingdoms—the members of the Hunt being called upon for no expense beyond maintaining their own poultry and earthstopping fund. The insignia of membership of the Badminton Hunt are a blue coat (or habit) and buff facing; the right to wear which is only acquired by the Duke's invitation. It is breaking no new ground to write what is a fact of common admission, viz., that the best turned-out field of the present day is that of the Duke of Beaufort. The country is rich in young blood; has its full share of wealth, and more than its share of good class and good fellowship. About a hundred and fifty county people wear the blue, of whom some twenty are ladies. Over the stone walls of Gloucestershire the fair sex is by no means always the weaker one; for an unusual number of ladies ride hard and hunt frequently. The largest fields, as a rule, are on the Tetbury side, when not only does all the Hunt assemble, but the V.W.H. and the Berkeley come in force from over the border; and a large contingent arrives by train from Cheltenham and the Cotswold.

The Vale of White Horse cuts right into the Badminton Country about this point, running in a sharp angle up to the town of Malmesbury. Indeed, this corner of the V.W.H. was at one period offered to the grandfather of the present Duke. Had he accepted it, the outline of his country would have become much more complete and even, though the additional territory was anything but needed. On the other side, however, the increasing suburbs of Bristol, and the growing chain of coalpits in its neighbourhood

(running up to and beyond Westerleigh), have recently encroached so much on the country in this direction, as to have prompted in no small degree the extension of territory in the extreme South. Roughly speaking, the old boundary line between the Badminton and South-and-West-Wilts ran from Bath by Melksham to Devizes—Neston being the farthest meet. Previous to last season ('81—'82), however, the Duke took back the ground lent to the latter Hunt. Erlestoke was also relinquished by the South and West Wilts, and his Grace now hunts as far South as Westbury, Little Cheverel, and Market Lavington on the edge of the downs. The whole of the newly added territory is a beautiful grass vale, of the most perfect type. Its fences are all negotiable, and it is altogether a charming country in which to hunt; for in addition to its merits as riding ground, it carries a capital scent throughout. If it has any fault at all, it is to be found in the deep going it always presents by Christmas time. At present, too, it must own to a shortcoming in the matter of coverts; a point, however, that is being rapidly remedied by its residents, who one and all are striving hard to make their district do justice to itself. Small withy beds have been set growing at various spots on the plain; and how much such effort was wanted will be easily gleaned from the fact that from Erlestoke to Spye Park is a ten mile point of level grass, with scarce a covert by the way to hold a fox or direct his line. Among the chief workers towards the desired end are Mr. Walter Long of Rood Ashton, Mr. S. Watson-Taylor of Erlestoke, Mr. Stancomb of Potterne,

Mr. J. Stancomb of Shaw, and Hon. E. Bouverie of Market Lavington. At Rood Ashton there is already a very large woodland; and again at Erlestoke is a similar good covert on the hill side overhanging the valley. The fences of the vale in question are of the bank-and-ditch description, the banks low and the ditches not so wide and deep as they are found in many countries—as for example in the Suffolk, which was last under notice. Good sport has already been seen here: for instance — the thirty-nine minutes' gallop from Keevil Withybed to kill in the town of Melksham.

A similar class of vale country runs up by the side of the Avon between Chippenham and Compton Bassett; and this too gets very deep as winter goes on—the neighbourhood of Great Wood and Dauntsey especially. Great Wood, which stands just on the edge of the V.W.H. territory—and generally sends a fox forth over the strong Swindon grass—will be remembered as the source of the famous run of February 22nd 1871—as widely known in the west under the name of The Great Wood Run as The Waterloo Run is renowned in Northamptonshire. Meeting on this gallant occasion at Swallett's Gate, they ran for three hours and a half unceasingly, across the whole breadth of the V.W.H. Country into the Old Berkshire, to ground in the village of Highworth—fourteen miles as the crow flies, seven-and-twenty as the hounds travelled—and a superb line all the way. Between this Avon Vale and what is as yet termed the New Country, comes in, it should be mentioned, a rough strip of ground twixt Chippen-

ham and Devizes, sandy soil and broken woodlands—Bowood (Lord Lansdowne's) and Spye Park (Major Spicer's) being the central points.

To the east of Compton Bassett again—or beyond Cherhill—the Duke's hounds get on to the Wiltshire Downs, great stretches of open galloping grounds—over whose grassy service they have many a fast spin. Beckhampton Gorse for instance, is the source of many such a burst; and so was, until lately, St. Ann's Hill. The gorse, at the latter spot no longer exists; but to make amends for its loss Lord Ilchester is building a nice new gorse covert midway between Beckhampton and St. Ann's.

Moving westward and north-westward across the country from the Wiltshire Downs, we find the Duke of Beaufort's territory to consist, so to speak, of a series of plateaux, on different levels, each having its distinct characteristics. Leaving the Downs we have the above-mentioned vale on the east bank of the Avon: on the other side of the river we get at once on to a very different district—of which Hullavington is the centre, and which reaches from the Avon to about Malmesbury and Easton Grey. A great deal of this is grass, and, though the soil is of a lighter description it bears the name of being some of the best scenting ground of the Hunt. The fences are walls and fences intermingled. Beyond this again is the Tetbury country—a smooth tableland of light plough and stonewalls (exclusively) stretching from Cirencester to Didmarton and its vicinity. The Cirencester Woodlands, close to the town and verging on the Cotswold Hills, are enormous coverts. They are

never visited by the Duke's hounds during cub-hunting, but occasionally in April; and, rough as is the country beyond, some good runs have been achieved—notably one, three years ago, which ended in a kill at Cowley, four miles from the town of Cheltenham. At the other extremity of the country, viz., round Colerne and Slaughterford, are some other rough hill coverts, which, with the whole of the district between Bath and Cold Ashton, come into great use for cub-hunting and in the spring.

Lastly, below the points of Alderley, Horton, Tormarton, Dirham Park, &c., on the west we dip suddenly down below the high level on which Badminton stands, and find ourselves in the low deep plain of the Lower Woods and Chipping Sodbury—the latter district bearing the designation of the Sodbury Vale. The Lower Woods are of great extent, and are with the exception of a single small corner on the north side—the property of the Duke. The rides, naturally very heavy and difficult, have been greatly improved of late years; and it is now much easier for a huntsman to get about with his hounds, and for a field to keep within hail. Foxes swarm in these great coverts in numbers sufficient for quite one day a week. They will also very frequently face the open; and then, if they keep to the vale, will travel far over a good country. The Sodbury Vale is all fenced with bank-and-ditch—the ditches being very blind through all the early part of the season. The hedges too are generally strong and most of the land is in grass. Just above the Lower Woods run the Kilcot Hills; much of the

yearly cub-hunting being done between here and Boxwell.

The splendid pack of hounds kennelled at Badminton dates back to about the year 1728; and the present Duke of Beaufort took over the heirloom with his title in 1853. In recent years the chief sources from which new strains have been brought into the pack have been the Grove and Brocklesby Kennels, while all along the Dukes of Beaufort and the Earls of Portsmouth have exchanged good offices in this direction. All his Grace's tenants, both in Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire, are in the habit of walking puppies; and many of the farmers in North Wilts have also taken puppies in recent years. Altogether some fifty or sixty couple are sent out annually. Lord Worcester has now hunted the hounds (five days a week) for fourteen years with undisputed success. As a proof of what a large and thoroughly preserved country can stand—and what energy can achieve—it may be noted that he killed no less than ninety-two brace of foxes last season.

Chippenham is no doubt the most convenient quarter, from whence to command the Duke's country, being fairly near the centre of it, and also having direct railway communication with London (about two hours and a half *viâ* Swindon and Paddington). Malmesbury has also the latter advantage; but is more on the outskirts of the country, though well placed for the meets of the V.W.H. as well. Tetbury again, it is only about four miles from Malmesbury Station, and is convenient enough for all the Northern fixtures.

It will be gathered from some of the above jottings that the Duke of Beaufort's country demands a hunter of more than ordinary talent, and often of great endurance. He will seldom be called upon to fly a big place in his stride; but will be constantly jumping—either over stonewalls, or on-and-off banks having a hedge on the top and a ditch on one side or the other. A heavy man will certainly do best to ride slowly at all his fences here. If a wall, this follows as a matter of course: if it be a bank-and-ditch, his horse will take much less out of himself if allowed to put his feet among the thorns,—though few of these fences are so broad that he could not readily cover them at a spring. A wall is a delightful kind of jump with a horse that is accustomed to it, though a very snare to a green and violent beginner. It presents also a rather terrifying aspect to the stranger educated only to the thin strand of a blackthorn binder; but it will not give him half as many falls, and the sense of awe soon wears off on acquaintance. There are not many brooks in the country, though two or three exist in the new vale, and there is the Brinkworth brook on the V.W.H. border, and another stream running between Hilmarton and Foxham, called the Cowage Brook. The horse, then, for this country should be short on the leg, deep in the girth—and generally given as little as possible to sprawling about. He must be able to gallop through dirt, up hill or down, to jump out of deep ground and to go on as long as he is wanted. In fact, if he has to take his turn in every part of the Duke's country, he must be a hunter of exceptional class and strength. The farmers of the country are all naturally

fond of foxhunting and staunch to the Hunt. Bad times have, as elsewhere, somewhat thinned their numbers at the covert side; but they still turn out in fair strength, especially on the Devizes and Wiltshire side.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday being the days of hunting, the usual disposition as regards locality is as follows:—Monday is for the Tetbury, or stonewall district—where it may be said hounds can either run hard or cannot run at all. Its foxes do not always keep their necks as straight as in some other parts, though exceptions to the contrary are constantly found. Newnton Lodge (the residence of Mr. G. S. Estcourt, member for North Wilts) is a frequent meet; and from his coverts of Newnton Gorse and Shipton Wood a run often ensues on to similar table land of the V.W.H. or into their deep Bradon country. Charlton Park (Lord Suffolk's place) over the border is a very common point. Another meet is Trouble House, whence they draw Trull, &c. When Avening is named as the fixture, the morning is likely to be spent on rough hilly ground, though the afternoon will probably lead to Union Gorse and a pleasant stonewall country.

Tuesday is generally given to the Sodbury Vale, that day and Friday being always devoted to the low country on the extreme west. It is generally accepted, however, that Friday is for The Lower Woods; and that Tuesday will find hounds nearer Bath, at such places as Dodington, Toll Down, &c. The Lower Woods, which extend for about three miles in length, and one in breadth, are extremely strong in under

covert during the greater part of the winter—the grass growing so long and rank that hounds can scarcely work through it till it has felt some frost. At times a good holding scent is met with, especially—as is natural—when the leaf is thoroughly dead. From The Lower Woods they are likely to go up the hill to Badminton towards the afternoon—drawing Horton Bushes, a new acquisition of the Duke's, and Chalkley —which, however, does *not* belong to his Grace—on the way to The Park. Nearly all the upper end of the park is fern and low thornbush covert; and there are several nice woods and plantations, Swan Grove being the chief of them.

Wednesday is the day chosen for the Wiltshire Vale. Swallett's Gate is the meet for Great Wood (which is the property of Lady Holland, and is about a hundred acres in extent). The Mermaid is for Christian Malford and a new gorse near, both belonging to Mr. Meux. From Highway Common, which is just under the hill, they may go either into the vale or on to the hill above, for instance, to Stanmore and Berwick Gorse, or to Cleeve Wood in the Vale; and foxes are also frequently to be found lying in the open. Blacklands is the meet for Compton Bassett (Major Heneage's), whence they may get on to Bremhill. Sometimes they meet at Rowde for Roundaway, where Mr. E. Colston has strong and well preserved coverts, and a good fox is always to be found in the Park. About one Wednesday in the month hounds are taken into the "new vale," and as coverts increase, they will no doubt find themselves there still oftener. For Rood Ashton they usually meet at Yarnbrook Gate; and

other fixtures are Semington Cross Roads and Erlestoke.

Saturday is generally employed in the Hullavington neighbourhood, where the stone walls of the north gradually give way to hedges and ditches. Hullavington itself is a very frequent meet, having many small coverts within reach. Sometimes hounds move on to Draycot Park (Lord Cowley's), sometimes to Stanton Park (Lord Radnor's), where there is a good wood of 70 or 80 acres: and they have other draws to select from in Angrove, West Park, Bincombe, Bradfield, and Higham Wood. Foss Lodge, too, is often the place of meeting, pointing to Sir John Neeld's coverts about Grittleton. Easton Grey may lead to about the same draws as Hullavington, or the Weston Birt (Mr. Holford's).

It should have been mentioned that another little strip of country comes in occasionally on a Tuesday. This is in the vicinity of Pickwick—the ordinary meet being The Cross Keys, whence Corsham (Lord Methuen's) or the nice coverts of Mr. G. P. Fuller at Neston may be drawn—a good deal of pleasant grass marking the country round.

THE COTSWOLD.*

CHELTENHAM is at once the base and main source of the Cotswold Hunt. Without the existence of Cheltenham there might have been difficulty in ever constituting this as a separate country—still more in maintaining it. The pretty and popular town nestles in a hollow, with the Cotswold Hills forming a half moon round it. The Kennels are at their feet, just on the outskirts of the town; and it is almost exclusively on these heights that hounds go forth to hunt the fox.

A word of history is necessary here, to date the formation of the country. The late Earl Fitzhardinge hunted not only the present Berkeley Country; but every alternate month during the season moved his hounds from Berkeley Castle to the Cheltenham Kennels in order to hunt the present Cotswold and North Cotswold (then termed the Broadway) districts. Soon after his death his successor, Admiral Berkeley, limited his ground to the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury road—thus reserving for himself the Tewkesbury-and-Gloucester Vale, and leaving the hills behind Chelten-

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 15, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

ham for Mr. Cregoe Colemore. The latter accordingly, in the year 1858, formed a pack—buying hounds from Lord Gifford, who was then retiring from the Vale of White Horse, and also some from Mr. Farquharson of the Cattistock. With these he worked the Cheltenham and Broadway countries together—till Lord Coventry took over the Broadway, to create the North Cotswold. On Mr. Colemore's death in 1871, Sir Reginald Graham was Master of the Cotswold for two years; when Mr. A. Sumner, the present Master, took the country.

The pack now in Kennel descends direct from Mr. Coleman's purchases; but Mr. Sumner has spared neither pains nor expense to obtain the best blood of Brocklesby, Badminton, Belvoir, Berkeley, and Lord Coventry, to blend with the strains in existence at home. The consequence is that the pack have all the speed and stamina necessary to fly the hills, and the drive and stoutness needed to push a woodland fox through the wide strong coverts to his death in the open. The undulations of the Cotswold hills are very steep and severe; and hound and horse alike, to live over them, must possess the most pronounced propelling power and own a spotless lineage. The only fence—with the exception of an occasional insignificant hedge—is the loose stonewall of Gloucestershire—formidable enough, though, in its varying height and under the trying conditions of pace and stiff ascents. On a good scent, hounds can race over the walls quite as quick as horses—taking the jump almost abreast, and with none of the stringing, jostling, and subsequent panting after the leaders

that belong to the gaps and smeuses of strong thick hedges. Hounds can, naturally, carry themselves up the steep hillsides far faster than horses can carry an indefinite weight of humanity: and the only chance horses have is to make best use of their shoulders, where the ground favours them and their heads are pointing down hill. It must not be supposed that hounds can run every day over these wide slopes of light plough. Too often the soil exhibits a coldness and indifference to Reynard's line of flight, that make progress almost impossible. But when a scent and a straight fox are both forthcoming, he must be a quick man on a smart horse who would ride close on the line of hounds. To keep them more or less in sight is seldom difficult; for, once you are away from the coverts, the ground will generally be found open and easy to the view. Your horse, by the way, need not —should not—be a big one. Strength behind the saddle, and blue blood in every vein, are essential. A lengthy horse will soon tire up the hills; and though he may jump a stone wall when fresh as well as another, the difficulty of raising himself for this particular kind of leap becomes more distressing at each effort. A wet autumn is needed to insure scent and sport; and it is surprising what an amount of rain the light soil of the hills will soak up. It then lets horses in to a great depth—while hounds can run their best. On the other hand, under exactly opposite conditions, there is often a tremendous scent in a dry March, with the dust flying in clouds.

The Cotswold foxes are not only plentiful, but strong and ready to travel. Of course such great

woods as those of Withington and Chedworth in the centre of the country, and such rough and extended fastnesses as the Cranham woodlands in the south, take a great deal of hunting; and the difficulties of sticking to one fox, and getting away at him with an united pack, tax a huntsman's powers to the utmost. With foxes on foot in every direction, it is only a free use of the horn that allows hounds—still more the field—to keep to the line of chase. But a Cotswold fox, once bustled into the open, will go right afield, and is not to be handled easily. It is only fair to note that during the past season ('81-'82) the Cotswold have had a succession of long and fine runs—due, no doubt, in some degree to the uninterrupted open weather, which allowed the strong coverts to be constantly worked.

Cheltenham is not a place that relies for its attractions entirely on what it can offer to the hunting-man. Its social advantages are very widely known; and the education of the young idea is a staple and profitable trade of the town. In truth, the man of hunting instincts is more likely to find himself in Cheltenham for the sake of an Indian liver, or to put his boys to school, than because he seeks a hunting-quarter of the highest possible class. Yet, having arrived at Cheltenham, he will find sport ready to hand, and a wide choice of hounds and country at a little distance. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays he may have the home pack: on a Tuesday Lord Fitzhardinge may often come almost up to his door, or the Vale of White Horse are to be reached: on a Thursday he may go with the North Cotswold: and on a Friday he may

reach the Heythrop or Lord Coventry. The Duke of Beaufort, again, is generally on the Cheltenham side of his territory on a Monday or Wednesday. Thus, if we add that the Worcestershire and the Ledbury are easily to be visited by train, it may be said that a Cheltenham man has choice of no less than nine packs.

It is stated above that the Cotswold country is almost entirely hill. The exception, however, lies in the little strip of lowland running northward of the Kennels, and known as the Cleeve, or Uckington, Vale. The coverts here are small; and a fox found in them will almost invariably set his head straight for the hills—at most a quick twenty minutes away. But should he by chance point for Tewkesbury Park, and run the length of the vale, the rider will be called upon to cross a country that will test the experience both of himself and his mount. A certain amount of grass is spread here and there; but, whether amid meadows or arable, the fences are as stiff as they are varied. He may be called upon to fly one, and have to pull up and creep the next. Stretching across the vale is the Treddington Brook, a fair level piece of water that leads to many a ducking.

At meets near the town of Cheltenham the Cotswold field is, as may be imagined, a large one. On the special occasion of the Queen Wood meet, which Mr. Sumner gives, as a matter of yearly custom, on the day following Christmas Day, not only is there an immense concourse of riders, but the townspeople turn out in thousands to make holiday. Queen Wood is on the steep slope a couple of miles from the town; and when it is drawn the mob line the height above, to

get full view of the proceedings and to shout and holloa madly. Their amusement never fails them—nor, indeed, do their lungs ever seem to tire—when Queen Wood has a fox for them.

As above noted, the Cotswold hunt three days a week; and the days are distributed as follows. Monday has an occasional meet in the little vale, such as Uckington Village for Uckington Gorse and the nice thorn covert of Uckington Brake—or Cleeve Village for Stoke Brake. The latter always holds a fox, and his point—or that of any vale fox hereabouts—is likely to be for such hill coverts as those of Woolstone, Dixon (a great stronghold), or Oxendon. Monday takes in, too, all the rest of the north of the country, adjoining the North Cotswold or Lord Coventry's. Dixon Wood, just mentioned, is amid good hunting but rough riding ground, and may give a run to Dumbledon in the North Cotswold or across to Bredon Hill in Lord Coventry's domain. Stanley Mount is a very similar meet. About Charlton Abbotts and Rowel Gate, two adjacent fixtures on the edge of the country, a good deal of woodland is again found, such as Bespidge Wood, Willis's Coppice (both the property of Mr. Fulwar Craven), and Baker's Wood. From either of the two former a run is likely to ensue into the North Cotswold, to the great Guiting Wood. From Queen Wood, again, a fox breaking over the hill will probably give a run across the downs, and lead up to Corn Dean Plantations, West Wood, or Postlip Quarries. Dowdeswell Wood is also within three miles of Cheltenham; and, as Queen Wood is the Christmas meet, so is Dowdes-

well Wood usually chosen as a sequel to a Cheltenham Ball—besides being invariably the scene of the opening meet of the season. The covert is heartily and successfully preserved by Mr. Coxwell Rogers.

On a Wednesday the Cotswold hunt the middle of their country, and advertise some of their best meets. The Withington and Chedworth woodlands are quite a feature, and a centre, of the Wednesday district; and scarcely a week passes but that hounds are in them at some time of the day. They are the property of Lord Eldon, who is the best possible friend to foxhunting. Again, a meet on the eastern edge of the country may very probably lead to a gallop over the best of the Heythrop stonewalls. Andover's Ford is a meet, and notable as the scene of the Cheltenham Steeplechases in the days of Jim Mason—when they ran four miles over walls, and finished at Puesdown, the last fence being a stonewall four feet high. From here the first coverts to draw are those of Mr. Fletcher near Shipton, small but good places on the hillside—Cheveley Grove, Compton Gorse, &c. After these, hounds generally get into the big woodlands above-mentioned. Round Puesdown are such coverts as Hazleton Grove (where a sure find is guaranteed under the care of the Brothers Minchin) and Prison Copse, close to North Leech, the site of the old prison for Cheltenham's transgressors. Both these are small coverts with plenty of room in their neighbourhood, and the open hills of the Heythrop just over the borders to the east. Puesdown was a favourite meet of the old Earl Fitzhardinge; who to the last always drew his coverts himself, though hounds went on

afterwards under the management of Harry Ayres, his clever and veteran huntsman. So fond are his hounds said to have been of the Earl, that when, as often happened, he was driving late to the meet, the old huntsman could always point to the pack and give out "Master's on the road!" long before his carriage was visible in the distance, or the sound of its wheels could be heard. When once he had driven up and alighted he would let his favourites jump over and bedaub him with mud to their hearts' content.

Naunton Inn is another meet in this neighbourhood, with the thorn covert at Gazeley and the New Gorse to draw. From Salperton Park, too, after drawing the plantations, they are likely to take the same lot of coverts as from the two last-mentioned meets, and of course equally likely to take a trip into the Heythrop. Withington is generally advertised for its wood, and for Chedworth and the Star Wood; and a meet at Fossebridge is pretty certain to be followed by a find in the Osier Bed. From the Chedworth Woods, by the way, an excursion into the wall and tableland portion of the V.W.H. is a very probable contingency.

Saturday, too, is all on the hill, and embraces all the lower part of the country—to wit, from Cheltenham to Cirencester. The overhanging woodlands of Cranham cover a great rough area in this district; but, apart from these, the coverts are not of an inordinate size. Chatcomb is perhaps the nearest to Cheltenham of the Saturday meets—being situated close to Seven Springs, the source of the Thames. From here are drawn the larch plantations of Mr.

Elwes of Colesbourne (an old and good friend to fox-hunting). At Cowley Mr. Richardson-Gardener has always had foxes in his wood, since he came into possession. At one time he kept a pack of staghounds; and the deer—both red and white — that he then hunted are now to be seen (or their progeny) browsing in the park. Rencomb Lodge is a popular fixture, bringing out the Cirencester division in force. From it they draw the nice wood of Old Park, Clifferdine, and Eycot, all good coverts on the Rencomb estate. Combend Wood has also plenty of foxes, being most successfully looked after by the Rev. J. Pitt and a farmer, Mr. J. Pope. Woodmancote is for Moore Wood, the property of another good fox preserver, Mr. J. P. Haines. From North Cerney they generally go to Badgendon Wood and Hinton's Gorse (Mr. Capel Croome's), and perhaps to Dagling-worth Grove—quite on the outskirts of the country and within a mile of the extensive Cirencester Woods, into which, of course, they frequently run. On the roughest district of the Hunt are also the following Saturday meets — Birdlip for Whitcomb and the Cranham Woods (the latter belonging to Lady Croomie, and carefully tended in the interests of fox-hunting by her nephew Mr. N. Hicks-Beach); Brims-field for the Park Wood and the Syde Woods; Miserden (in a region almost precipitous) with Miserden Park Wood, Winston Wood, a good covert on the hill side, and the Woods of Cranham and Whitcomb to follow. Prinknash Gate is in the same neighbourhood, and has also the coverts of Prinknash Park and Pope Wood.

THE DUMFRIESSHIRE.*

The sheltered nook of Annandale is the locale of the Dumfriesshire Hunt. Lofty, sweeping, hills—the home of the grouse and still more the breeding ground of the black game—hem in this arena to the north, to the east, and to the west; while the waters of the Solway Firth divide it from the county of Cumberland. Directly Gretna Green is passed, you are on Dumfriesshire hunting ground; and the Caledonian railway, that had no existence in the days of runaway matches and romance, will carry you through its length as it follows the Annan upwards to the river's mountain sources. A basin of level, well-tilled ground forms the heart of the country (say, from above Lochmaben and Lockerbie down to the sea), ribbed in by the high grass ridge of the Corrie hills on the east, and by the more cultivated slopes of Tinwald on the west. The town of Dumfries is quite an outside point in the latter direction; and, indeed, The Annandale would, as far as geographical position is concerned, have been a more strictly appropriate name for the Hunt than The Dumfriesshire. The county is certainly classified

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 1.

among the Lowlands; but many of its hillsides will compare with either Aberdeenshire or Inverness, for steepness and severity; and riding is out of the question immediately outside the precincts of the little country in question. Sheep farms yield here a more profitable return than grouse moors; heather is freely burned; and, consequently, where the lower slopes are open to the foxhunter, he will find himself almost continually on thick green grass. The tilled vale carries quite a fair scent at most times; but the green sheep-walks of the hills hold an exuberant scent to which hounds can always fly. Naturally the riding in the one case is subject to very different conditions to what it is under in the other. In the low country, constant little obstacles have to be surmounted, requiring experience and discrimination on the part of both horse and man. Great jumping power or great boldness are seldom called for; but if the fences are ragged to the eye, they are not left with their gaps unmended, nor are they by any means built to any one universal pattern. The hedges are low and the thorn is of a dwarfed and stubbly growth; but every opening is patched up with light timber, and often a low bank assists an otherwise insignificant fence. Ditches are rarely considered necessary; and nature has provided very few streams which have not a firm pebbly bottom under shallow water. The Dalton Brook, near the Kennels, is almost the only instance of a wide and often unavoidable water-jump. Wire, too, comes in extensively for fence making—not often, however, as an adjunct, and very seldom as a hidden snare. A great number of the fields are divided, one from the other, only by quadru-

pled strands of wire running from post to post—a hindrance to forward progress, but no instrument of danger. In short, a rider to hounds must go with his eyes open; and a horse must be ready to pop about wherever called upon. A small, active, well-bred, and manageable horse is much to be preferred to one that is over-sized or in any degree rash. The vale is at times very soft and deep, if not exactly holding—the soil being of a description that readily soaks rain in and readily gets dry again. Of permanent pasture there is little, if any, in the low country; but a great deal of ground is laid down in rye grass for some three or four years, and is then ploughed up again. The hills, on the contrary, are—especially on the east, or Corrie side—almost entirely sheep-walk, on which coarse and wet, but sound grass flourishes, with only a sprinkling of heather here and there. As already mentioned, hounds can always race their fox over these wild slopes. Their followers must be on the look-out for the narrow, open trenches, which—cut down the faces of the hills—constitute the only drainage; and which, often completely overgrown with grass, afford continual opportunity for a roll on the mossy turf. Big, round, stones scattered among the grass, are apt to vary the monotony of falling upon a velvet surface; but, as a rule, you may ride in very fair safety after hounds over the uplands—though the pack is likely enough to travel faster than you can. Stone walls—which are occasional on the lower ground—become the only fences on the hills. They are seldom too formidable to jump; and, in any case, the loose round stones give way easily—whether to the touch of a horse's

knees or to the attack of discreet and dismounted sportsmen.

The Dumfriesshire Hunt, having no neighbours nearer than The Ayrshire to the west and the Duke of Buccleuch to the east—a wide-spread of hill and moorland dividing it from either—is, in fact, only limited for country by the natural features which surround it. Thus, it is found impossible to meet farther north than Wamphray Station, with Dundoran Wood as the extreme draw; and thither hounds go about once a season. The Raehills district is all rough and unhuntable; but, farther down, the hills of Tinwald and Rammerscales provide good going (partly sheep-walk, partly arable). The Annan vale contains the pick of the country—Castlemilk, Dormont, Kinmount, Comlongon, &c., to the sea. The Corrie Hills (which, by the way, belong to Mr. Robert Jardine) fill up the opposite side, till they merge on to grouse moor. A flat, low country comes in again below the Tinwald hills, and near the sea; but is a good deal spoiled and interfered with by the presence of Lochar Moss, a tract of bog and waste over which it is difficult to walk, impossible to ride, yet which a fox will often lead hounds to cross. To the south-east—towards Longtown—however, where a rideable country still continues, foxes are not to be found; and the farthest meets in this direction are, therefore, Springkell, Broats, and Stapleton Tower.

Scarcity of foxes, however, is nowhere else a complaint in the Dumfriesshire Country. Though so immediately adjoining regions purely shooting, a blank day has been unknown for at least two years. The

landowners are mostly resident, generally sporting, and all inclined to uphold such an institution as a country pack of foxhounds. The coverts, too, happen to be large and numerous; and so foxes have every chance of multiplying. Again, the very size and number of the coverts prevent their being easily killed; for, though the woods are chiefly fir (often with an under carpet of heather), and carry a good scent, a beaten fox very frequently finds a substitute. On the hills there are little else but belts and plantations of spruce fir; though the patches of heather will often hold a fox.

Among the chief ranges of coverts are the following, commencing with the neighbourhood of Lockerbie, which is the most central and accessible point within the radius of the Hunt. At Turmuir is a chain of small woods, perhaps forty or fifty acres apiece, belonging to the Duke of Buccleuch. Mr. Robert Jardine has excellent and well-preserved coverts at Castlemilk; and those of Mr. Brooks at Hoddam Castle are equally good—Woodcock Aire being the principal one. Brownmoor, which also belongs to the Duke of Buccleuch, is a wood comprising several hundred acres of Scotch fir with heather underfoot. Turning to the south, we find Kinmount (the property of the Marquis of Queensberry, but at present the residence of the Master, Mr. L. Salkeld), where there are seven hundred acres of covert intermingling with the park and precincts. To instance its value to the Hunt, it may be mentioned that hounds drew the coverts no less than twenty-one times last season, without ever failing to find a fox. At Comlongon

are good and extensive coverts of Lord Mansfield's; and at Rammerscales others—steep hill-side coverts and deep glens—belonging to Major Bell-McDonald. Rockhall is carefully preserved by Mr. Young, who has the place from Sir A. Grierson, of Lagg. Close to Dumfries are Tinwald Downs; and in the centre of the country are the nice hunting coverts at Dormount (Mrs. Carruthers') and at Kirkwood (Mr. A. Steel's).

The Kennels are at Leafield, some half-dozen miles from Lockerbie, and are well placed and healthy. The pack has been much benefited of late years by drafts from Belvoir, to add to good northern blood already in Kennel. The history of the hounds and the Hunt is briefly this. In 1842 Colonel Salkeld, of Holm Hill, in Cumberland, set up a pack of fox-hounds; of which, however, about six years afterwards he made a present to his Kennel-huntsman Joseph Graham. The latter brought them over the border, and established himself and them at the Blue Bell Hotel, Lockerbie—hunting them thence for a season, with what help he could get on the spot. The following year he had a regular subscription of some two or three hundred pounds; after which the late Lord Drumlanrig (afterwards Marquis of Queensberry) took them in hand and made up deficiencies. Mr. Carruthers of Dormount next became Master for several seasons; and the present Lord Queensberry then held them for two years. He was succeeded in 1870 by Mr. Johnstone of Halleaths; who at the expiration of a ten-years' Mastership was presented with his picture by the members of the Hunt. Mr. Louis Salkeld is now entering on his third season in

command. With about forty-five couple of hounds in Kennel he generally finds himself in a position to take the field three days a week rather than the promised five days a fortnight; so Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays seldom fail to see the pack at work. No particular order as to the meets is observed, the convenience of the country being the only guide. Some of the leading fixtures are as follows:—On the Lockerbie side, Castlemilk, Balgray, and Corrie Lodge for the hill district, Lockerbie House (Mr. Johnstone-Douglas'), Jardine Hall (Sir Alexander Jardine's), and Halleath (Mr. Johnstone's). In the south and south-west are Kinmount, Hoddam Castle, Comlongon, Whitecroft (the residence of Mr. A. Lyon, Hon. Sec. to the Hunt)—the last being for Braehills, Carrutherstown Moss, &c.—and Knockhill for Brownmoor. Towards Dumfries are Tinwald Downs, Rockhall, Ryemuir (Capt. Yorstoun's) and Marchmount, or occasionally Dumfries itself.

THE ALBRIGHTON.*

An extent of country that, if it were all preserved alike and all to be hunted alike, would require at least a second pack, is the portion of the Albrighton. It stretches from Stafford to Kidderminster; and finds foxhunting also for Wolverhampton and Birmingham by the way. Having the North Staffordshire above it and the Worcestershire at its feet, it has something of the character of either where it adjoins, gradually passing from the style of one to that of the other. Thus it has the deep heavy plough and dense woodlands of the Worcestershire in the south; the good scenting ground, small inclosures, and a sprinkling of the dairy meadows of the North Staffordshire in the north; while a kind of neutral zone of light soil, with much slightly-fenced arable, occupies the whole of its centre. Much of the south or south-west of the country is wild, rough, and untempting; again, a large district, reaching almost from Wolverhampton to Kidderminster, is sacrificed on the altar of game preserving; while a great tract, past the back of Wolverhampton up to the town of Birmingham, is

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 8, 9, 14, and 15. and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

held in black bondage to coal and iron. Yet for all these losses and drawbacks, enough remains to the Albrighton to make it a very sporting country, with room for four days a week. The heart and strength of the country may be said to lie in a limited radius, which contains the Kennels and is made up of such estates as those of Lord Bradford, Mr. Giffard, Lord Dartmouth, Mr. Foster, &c., whereon foxes are the first and all-important care. Other large and very friendly landowners there are, freely scattered over the country, for instance, Mr. Monckton of Stretton Hall, Mr. Cotes at Woodcote, Colonel Kenyon-Slaney at Hatton, Mr. Vernon at Hilton, Lord Lichfield at Ranton and Shelmore; while Sir Thomas Boughey himself has much property at Aqualate, and the Duke of Sutherland owns Lilleshall and a very large area round. The frequency of county places and gentlemen's residences is quite a feature of The Albrighton. In some of the best preserved and most closely-hunted parts of the country, you are often scarcely out of one park before you are in another—a matter which may be of considerable benefit to hounds, who delight in finding themselves on the wide well-kept turf, but which scarcely meets the aspirations of the riding division who have to make the best of their way round by gates. The Albrighton is by no means a grass country—nor has it even any particular part which might go by the name of its "grass side." At the same time it is certainly not solely plough; for grass meadows are scattered more or less freely everywhere, and the various parks in themselves constitute a considerable aggregate of sound turf. Nor can it be

spoken of *in toto* as a notably good scenting country; for the light soil of the body of it carries a strong scent only in October and early November, and, later on, after an excessive fall of wet. The best part for scent—and for sport—is the upper end, adjoining the North Staffordshire and the Shropshire and cut off by the Old Watling Street Road which crosses the country from Wolverhampton to Wellington. North of this the soil at once gets stronger, the fences stouter, the country more open and scent more reliable. In the Penkridge direction coverts are rather scarce, and the gorses planted in recent years have had no chance against the severe winters; but everywhere else there are coverts enough for all requirements; while all through the Albrighton territory the foxes are stout and wild. The farmers are most sturdy friends; will walk puppies to any extent (sixty couple might be got out if desired); and they themselves even assist to maintain the poultry-fund as well as rendering its distribution easy. Bad times have for the last season or two kept many of them on foot who had always before ridden a hunter, but who may yet again bring a young one to the covert-side.

A short-legged, clever horse is the most appropriate mount with the Albrighton hounds. Some breeding is of course desirable; but it is above all necessary that he should look where he is going and have learned that a deep ditch may often underlie thick waving grass. "Go slow at your fences, and let his head alone," is a local axiom, the adoption of which may save a stranger many a fall. The class of fence met with in the north is exactly similar to that

described under the head of The North Staffordshire and The Cheshire. In the centre of the country you will meet with little else but light thorn fences, generally on low banks and seldom with any ditch worth mentioning. Yet these hedges, partly from their very insignificance, very often upset a careless horse; for a strong grower or a stout stake may intercept progress when least expected, and a complete turn over is the result.

The hounds are kennelled in a charming situation and at a very convenient point, Whiston Cross (some two miles from the little town of Albrighton), whence a sweeping view of the north-west of the country is obtainable—the wooded height of The Wrekin, across the Severn in Shropshire territory, being a prominent landmark in the distance. The pack was formed by Sir Thomas Boughey some sixteen years ago; but about ten years since the kennel was attacked by hydrophobia, and the dogs were destroyed. Drafts from Lord Coventry, the Duke of Grafton, Mr. Musters, and from other sources, formed the fresh foundation, upon which has been worked in the best acknowledged strains from the Belvoir, Milton, &c., &c.; and at the present moment there are some fifty-five couple of most workmanlike hounds in Kennel.

The Albrighton, as it now stands, may be said to be made up of the old Enville country (from Ran Dans to Wrottesley, hunted by the Earls of Stamford in the last century and beginning of this), together with the Albrighton district and a piece of the old Woore country in the extreme north. This last was added on the retirement of the late Sir Thomas Boughey in

1840, after he had hunted the two former portions, besides a great part of the present North Staffordshire, at his own expense for four seasons. The centre of what is now the Albrighton was but little hunted in the early part of the century; and it is said that Mr. John Mytton, of "Nimrod celebrity," having Kennels at Ivetsey Bank, near Penkridge, used to ride from Halston beyond Shrewsbury and meet his hounds, and back more than thirty miles again after hunting. The present Sir Thomas Boughey succeeded Mr. Orlando Stubbs in the Mastership in 1866.

The Wolverhampton neighbourhood produces the largest fields of the week; and, generally speaking, the attendance, though comfortably below that of Cheshire, is anything but small. A goodly number of county men are fond of hunting; all the farmers hunt who can; and the wealth of the towns finds one of its outlets at the covertside. Wolverhampton holds a commanding position with regard to the Albrighton country; and Stafford is on the border between it and the North Staffordshire; but either Albrighton or Shifnal would be quieter, and equally convenient, hunting quarters for the country in question—and each of these places is between three and four hours from London (Paddington).

On the whole, the country presents a more than ordinarily flat surface. Patshull stands on a slight eminence, and gentle rises stretch away to the south of it; but there is nothing to merit the name of a severe hill from one end to the other.

Some few further details may be jotted down in glancing at the different districts in detail. The area

of light soil in the centre of the country extends from just above Shifnal practically (as far as hounds are concerned) to the neighbourhood of Enville; and in this portion little but plough is met with except along the edges of the brooks. On the Severnside, a little distance north of Bridgenorth, is the Apley estate, where Mr. W. O. Foster has a splendid stronghold for foxes in Apley Terrace—a rocky woodland covert occupying some miles of the river bank, and probably containing half a dozen litters of foxes at this moment. In the vicinity of this is the Worf, which joins the Severn at Bridgenorth; and which, though seldom jumpable, is often fordable, and has tributary brooks which are more negotiable for a hunter. In the district we are now alluding to are, as already mentioned, the estates of the Earl of Dartmouth at Patshull, Lord Wrottesley at Wrottesley (with two nice woods, Cranmoor and Simmons Wood); of the Earl of Bradford at Weston (with several small woods about the deer park and a very good covert two miles away, and in sight of the Kennels, Lizard Hill to wit); of Mr. Giffard at Chillington (Chillington Wood being some eight hundred acres, with many smaller coverts near); of Colonel Kenyon-Slaney at Hatton; and of Mr. Monckton at Somerford. And the above landowners are all keenly anxious to further the sport of fox-hunting.

In the country above the Watling Street Road, and extending almost to Eccleshall, the best covert is, perhaps, the White Sich, which also belongs to Lord Bradford. This is a wood of some thirty or forty acres surrounding a pool. But the largest woodlands

are those of the Duke of Sutherland at Sheriff Hales and Lilleshall—the former representing several hundred acres, and the latter being notable for its fine rides. These woods border on the wild moors of The Shropshire, a grass-and-ditch flat like the fens of Lincolnshire or South Kent. A few bridges over the main drains might render this district rideable; but at present it is as much as possible avoided by either Hunt. Mr. Cotes has some nice coverts at Woodcote; while at Aqualate Sir Thomas Boughey has recently added some promising gorses, to offer shelter for foxes beyond what is already to be found in the great deer-park. High Onn Wood belongs to Mr. Morris, late Master of the Shropshire; and, turning to the Penkridge side, we come to another good covert in the Whittemores (Lord Hatherton's). Not far from this is Coppenhall Gorse, the property of Lord Willoughby de Broke, and held to be the most chosen spot in the Albrighton country—being an excellent covert on favourite ground. It has long been considered that a gallop from Coppenhall Gorse to the Whittemores or Barton—or *vice versâ*—will furnish as good a criterion of the merits of a man to hounds as the Hunt can select. A very nice piece of country, but deficient in coverts, lies between The Whittemores and Seighford—the fences very blind, the hedges strong, and the ditches deep and seldom cleaned out. The lanes, too, throughout the district are numerous, deep and narrow—anything but easy to cross except with a steady cautious horse. Timber is rare here as throughout the Albrighton country—at least in a strong shape. The Earl of Lichfield owns the Ranton Woods and Shel-

more Park (good holding coverts of about a hundred acres apiece, where foxes are wild and plentiful). It is a matter of tradition that a former Lord Lichfield, when Master of the Atherstone, always kept post-chaises on the road, conveying fresh caught Ranton foxes to be turned down before his hounds next day—and that the cream of his sport was thus obtained. Mr. Burne of Loynton has Blakemoor Pool—in a wild region with wild foxes; and a travelling fox will often take hounds back thence to his home in North Staffordshire.

Working eastward towards Cannock Chase we come to Pendeford, now occupied by Mr. Boycott Wight, and Hilton (Mr. Vernon's), at both of which places foxes are well preserved. The fences in the neighbourhood are tolerably strong, though the soil is light. A run across and on to the chase sometimes occurs; but a fox heading Walsall-way is soon among the coalpits.

Between Wolverhampton and Stourbridge are many coalmines and iron works; but passing through this district by train, hounds can soon get fairly to work again. At Hagley (Lord Lyttleton's) are several fine coverts, *e.g.*, Hagley Wood, Short Wood, and the Clent Hills; and some few miles lower down into Worcestershire, we reach the great woodlands of Ran Dans, Chaddesley (Earl of Shrewsbury), and Pepper Wood (Mr. Noel's)—all well preserved. Sir W. Throckmorton, too, has property hereabouts. This neighbourhood is essentially of Worcestershire stamp—wood and stiff plough intermingled, strong foxes, and generally a fair scent. But, approaching Birming-

ham, we get on to a nice strip of ground about Halesowen, with some pleasant and useful coverts, such as Ellwood and Upmoor—the latter the property of Mr. F. Lea-Smith, who is quite a pillar of help on the Worcestershire side. From either place a run is possible over a pretty little district that stands quite apart, with small grass inclosures and neat fences—dairy meadows, where sheep are little seen and people seldom about. Thus, a fox may travel here without interruption as far as the country extends—from Frankley right up to the town of Birmingham being about his bounds.

In the opposite direction—viz., the south-west of the country—is a rough wild corner—from Dudmaston downwards by the bank of the Severn almost to Kidderminster—which used to produce a great deal of sterling sport from its broken woods and dingles. From Castle Hill almost to Wolverhampton a succession of fine coverts follow one upon the other; but do little for foxhunting nowadays. Wassall Top, near Kidderminster, is still a meet, but not a very frequent one.

In conclusion, the following are some of the principal meets—the hunting days being Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. No set rule is observed; but the meets are arranged to suit the convenience of the country, and so as not to clash with shooting interests in various districts. Thus, on the Wolverhampton side, the chief fixtures are Wrottesley, Chillington, Patshull, and Hilton; while nearer Shifnal are Weston, Haughton Hall (for Mr. Brooke's nice coverts), The Lizard, Hatton Hall, and Sheriff

Hales. Near Bridgenorth are Apley, Davenport House (where Mr. Davenport has a good gorse), and Dudmaston for the wild ground by the riverside. In the neighbourhood of Newport are Aqualate, Woodcote, Longford (for coverts of Mr. Leeke's), and Loynton; while in the vicinity of Stafford are High Onn, Church Eaton (for Barton and Mr. Morris's coverts) and Penkridge for the Whittemores, &c.

THE NORTH COTSWOLD.*

The Cotswold Hills forming a continuous plateau, from Bath to the borders of Warwickshire, the eastern end, together with a certain amount of underlying vale, is the North Cotswold Country. The upper ground is of regular Cotswold type—light plough and limestone walls; while the lower is strong soil, stoutly fenced, and carrying quite as much grass as arable. The hill proper occupies about a moiety of the country—commencing half a dozen miles from Cheltenham, and reaching along the borders of the Heythrop, till it breaks into a vale about Campden, and lets the Great Western across on its way north. Beyond this is a square patch of the county of Warwick, held neutrally by The North Cotswold and The Warwickshire, and containing the separate and easier eminences of Stoke and Ilmington, with their various little coverts. Round and underneath these runs a beautiful grass valley, which is equal to anything of the same limit in the Shires. Foxes, however, seldom care to venture across it; unless when found by the Warwickshire in the lower ground.

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 15, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

They will then frequently make for the hills; but it is quite an exceptional case when a fox leaves the top country in order to sink the vale. This pretty strip (round Admington to about Honeybourne) is, be it understood, in The Warwickshire not in The North Cotswold territory—and the fences are as big, and the going as good, as even in the Shuckburgh and Grandborough district.

From Honeybourne, back by Evesham to Winchcombe, runs the Evesham Vale, between the prominent height of Bredon Hill (within the Croome country) and the steep side of the Cotswold. This vale takes up the whole of the north-western length of the country; and is broken in upon only by the isolated and comparatively small hill of Dumbleton. It is all a strong good soil; and, if it does not often carry a burning scent, it will generally hold the line of a fox even when he has gone a quarter of an hour. Fair hedge-and-ditch fences that require some jumping divide the fields, which in themselves are about equally distributed between grazing and tillage. The slope of the Cotswold range being on this side very much steeper than where it gradually drops into vale at its Warwickshire end, and being, besides, all grass, hounds almost invariably run up it very much faster than horses can follow; and thus, when you reach the top, the pack has often entirely disappeared, and it becomes a matter of difficulty to decide in which direction you must now ride. The vale foxes, moreover, are only too apt to breast the ascent, or else to reach and cling to the chain of coverts which succeed each other at short intervals under the brow. Most

of the coverts of The North Cotswold, indeed, are hillside woods, plantations, and natural gorses—the vale coverts of Dumbleton, Galleypot, Leasow Brakes, Paxford Blakemore, and Cleeve Banks, being, with West Gorse and Sezincote Warren on the top of the hills, about the only exceptions. When the coverts underhill are being drawn, it is of course a moot question as to whether you should ride above or below; but, besides the established fact that more foxes will break over a hill than below it, it is as well to bear in mind that you can generally get down hill pretty quickly, though it by no means follows that you can make your way fast up it. The largest woods are those of Guiting and Hailes, near the edge of the neighbouring Cotswold country; Litcombe, on the hillside between Hailes and Broadway (the site of the Kennels); and Weston Park, near Campden and the farther extremity of the Cotswold Hills. The last-named is an especial stronghold and standby to the Hunt; and seldom does a week pass without finding hounds at work there.

The wall country on the summit of the hills is exactly similar in character to the wolds of the Cotswold, the Heythrop, the Badminton, and the Vale of White Horse, already described. It wants wet, and plenty of it, to hold a scent—the one instance to the contrary being the occasion of an east wind in dusty March. When hounds *can* carry a head, they drive along in such a fashion as is seen nowhere else, unless it be occasionally on the unfenced Hampshire or Brighton downs. They then fling over the walls in a body, leaving one field after another behind them,

with none of the drag and straggling that must attend upon squeezing their way through smeuses and gaps. In fact, they can then burst their fox up very sharply, unless he can get to shelter, for no chance is given him of catching his second wind; while as for their followers, they must be mounted on something exceptionally smart if they are in any way to hold their own. At such times riding over the walls is excellent and most exciting fun; and men are carried away to push along over them with a determination they do not always evince elsewhere.

The eastern slant of the hill, as it dips towards Blockley, is much more gentle, and more rideable. The inclosures are mostly grass; and the hedges are fairly easy, with ditches generally small, almost insignificant. Permanent grass, it should have been mentioned, belongs only to the lower ground. On the hill, a great deal of soil is handed over to seed for a certain term of years; then, after carrying sheep for its allotted time, is once more converted to oat and barley land.

A very enjoyable little country, of which to be both Master and huntsman, must the North Cotswold be. Mr. Algernon Rushout, who fills the enviable joint office, is now commencing his tenth season—with an ample stock of foxes for the requirements of three days a week. So small an area would scarcely carry as many days, but that the coverts are very plentiful, and landowners and farmers alike favour foxhunting. Indeed, if it be not hypercritical to say so, coverts come almost too contiguously. With the exceptions above alluded to (which after all comprehend nothing

gigantic), they are not large or cumbersome; but they often follow each other so closely along the hillsides that a fox is naturally inclined to slip from one to the other, rather than go out of his way for a broad open course. But, with a full supply of good coverts, and a small and well-disposed field, Master-and-huntsman has every chance given him; and is freed from half the anxieties which would beset him in a difficult and crowded country.

Mr. Rushout succeeded Lord Coventry, on the occasion of the latter moving homewards to create the Croome country. Lord Coventry of course took his pack with him; and Mr. Rushout had to form a new one. This he did with material obtained from Lord Fitzhardinge's kennel, with the addition of a draft spared him by his predecessor. Upon this foundation he has built up an exceptionally neat pack, at the present moment numbering about twenty-nine couple. Lord Coventry, it should be mentioned, took the country in 1866 (when a committee started it with a separate existence); and followed Mr. Colmore, who in turn had taken over the Cotswold after Earl Fitzhardinge.

It will easily be understood that a more than ordinarily good type of horse is required for the North Cotswold country *and its environs*. Most horses can be taught to jump stone walls; but no horse can climb a steep hill quickly and gallop on afterwards, or can cross a deep and stiffly-fenced vale, unless he is built for it. A strong-backed well-bred hunter, on short legs, is the sort most in request—and, it must be added, most usually attained by the men

who hunt with the pack in question. Over the greater part of the country the field in attendance seldom musters more than fifty or sixty; and it is only on the Cheltenham side that anything like numbers put in an appearance. No town of any note comes within the borders; and both the country and the Hunt are unusually small.

The three days of hunting are generally arranged as follows—Tuesday is for the half of the country nearer to Cheltenham, Saturday for the neutral district and the rest of that side, leaving Thursday to be named where most convenient. Among the Tuesday meets are Guiting Wood, which may lead to a run in any direction, whether over Heythrop, Cotswold or North Cotswold ground: Ford Village also for Guiting Wood or Hailes: Taddington, a very old and favourite fixture on the hill, generally with a view to drawing Litcomb. (Mr. Cook and his father before him have always been true fox preservers, and friends of successive Masters. The Earl Fitzhardinge was always in the habit of going there overnight for meets on that side; and Lord Coventry, too, met with staunch and constant assistance.) Not far from Taddington is the meet of The Slate Quarries in the best of the hill-and-wall country. It has a nice gorse covert, well looked after by Mr. Hyatt of Snowshill. Kineton Thorns is another good fixture between Guiting and Sezincot; and Sezincot Warren (the property of the young Sir C. Rushout), close to Bourton Wood and the Heythrop boundary, is quite one of the strongholds of the Hunt. This last may be a Tuesday or a Saturday meet. For the Broadway neighbourhood either the Kennels, or the residence of

Mr. Chadwick, hon. sec. to the Hunt, is named; and from here they are likely to draw Galleypot, the principal covert in the vale (a nice gorse), whence a fox will often lead them a turn over the lower level before heading for the hills. The hill of Dumbleton, rising by itself out of the vale, has a good wood belonging to Mr. Kettlewell, where there are always many foxes. Between here and Hailes Wood is Shutcomb and Great Grove (Lord Sudeley's); and close to Somerville Aston is Leasow-Brakes.

Saturday as above-mentioned takes in the Warwickshire corner, hunted in alternate months by the North Cotswold and The Warwickshire. Admington itself (which lies in the heart of the splendid strip of vale already alluded to) is a Warwickshire meet; but some of Mr. Holland-Corbett's coverts, Lower Stoke Wood, &c., are drawn by both packs. Meon Hill close by (Mr. T. Cradock's) gives the best chance of a dip into this vale, and has some most useful little coverts about it. For the rest of the neutral territory, to wit, Stoke Wood, Mickleton Wood, and various smaller places, the ordinary fixture is Hidcote Quarries, or occasionally Mickleton. Blockley is for Paxford Blakemoor; and from the noted Weston Park (which is the property of Lord Gainsborough) they may work either on hill or vale. In the latter case they are likely to find themselves at Norton Gorse. Springhill Lodges is for the hill and a number of small coverts, of which West Gorse is probably the first draw.

PART VI.

LORD MIDDLETON'S.*

From York to the sea (as outlined by Filey and Flamborough Head, on the coast immediately below Scarborough) is the extent of Lord Middleton's country. Forty-three miles from end to end, and little or no use to be made of the railways, will convey in other words the distance of ground that his pack has to cover, even under the advantage of being kenneled in a most central position. Indeed, were it not that over a great part of the wolds the coverts lie wide apart, and the hillsides are so open that little or no shelter is afforded to outlying foxes, four days hunting in the week would barely take in an area that the late lord for a time found sufficient for six. As it is, Lord Middleton is able to commence hunting before the end of August, and to continue into the spring until he has, perhaps, even killed a May fox.

Quite half the country (to the east) is high undulating wold—very much of the type we see, for instance, with the Tedworth. The rest is about evenly divided

**Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 5 and 6, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

between low-lying vale (reaching to the town of York) and strongly-wooded hills, which take up the west and north-west of the hunt territory. Birdsall—Lord Middleton's seat, and the site of his kennels—forms nearly a centre point between these divisions—nestling, as it does, in a nook beneath the western edge of the wolds, and about equidistant from the farthest meets in either direction.

The River Derwent being the line of division between Lord Middleton's country and that of Capt. Johnstone on the north, the wolds slope quietly down in that direction; undulating again along their length, before meeting the Holderness or dipping abruptly to the west to the lower ground about Birdsall. Here and there deep grassy dales run inwards for a distance, especially in the south-west corner, but the wide sweeping surface of the wolds is to the east scarcely broken except at its rougher edges. In the early autumn, and till the stubbles are ploughed, there can be little better galloping ground than these open hills. They then hold a strong, often a racing, scent; and it is a good fox that can carry his brush in front of the speedy lady-pack for half an hour, and a fast horse that can live with them. There is next to nothing to jump; for low thorn hedges and sheep hurdles are the only fences—or, if by chance a stronger hedge is encountered, it would generally seem placed to guard a casual ravine, watercourse, or lane, where jumping is out of the question. But when once the plough has been at work, all this pleasant aspect disappears, exhilaration and pace depart, and the wolds assume a tamer aspect. Scent no longer lies on the upturned

soil; a huntsman's task can only be achieved by toil and perseverance; and hounds, instead of running with their heads up, have often to stoop for every yard. The loosened ground, too, soaks in the rain; and soon becomes quite as heavy riding as the plough of the firmer vale.

The coverts of the wolds are chiefly larch woods and plantations, with a few whins here and there—the latter, as everywhere in Yorkshire, still suffering from the murderous frosts of some recent winters, and in some cases having even died out altogether. The larch woods, being almost devoid of undergrowth, neither hinder hounds nor tempt foxes to linger, as coverts of similar extent are so apt to do. On the northern and southern edges of the wolds these broad patches of woodland are met with at considerable interval; whereas on the steep western slope they become almost continuous. Thus, looking down upon the Derwent, are Sir Charles Legard's fine woods at Ganton; while above Knapton are more large woods to form another great stronghold. About Scampston Hall, again, Mr. St. Quintin has good coverts; as also has Mr. Cholmley at Newton, notably High Wood. These four places represent, perhaps, the principal meets along the north; while Weaverthorp (for Lovell's Whin, &c.) and Wold Newton (for Causdale Whin, &c.) are two of the most frequent in the heart of the wolds. Along the western slope, again, a great chain of these larch woods, with grass paving the hillside beneath them, run from Settrington (the residence of the dowager Lady Middleton) to Birdsall; while Sledmere (the seat of Sir Tatton Sykes, and a

frequent and favourite meet) continues with numerous still larger coverts. On the south and overlooking the Holderness Vale is Boynton Hall (Sir Charles Strickland's), a place of great importance in the Hunt, and to reach which hounds are kenneled overnight at Rudston. Here, too, the many coverts are larch plantations. Borough Nook and Kilham are other meets on this side, with a view usually to Langtoft Whin, with Cottam Warren and ultimately the big woods of Sledmere to follow.

It is found that small well-bred horses do their work on the wolds with greater ease and success than the larger type that may find favour on the low ground. (In Holderness, it is true, most of the farmers ride little else but small thoroughbreds in any part of their country; but though breeding is held as essential everywhere in Yorkshire, strength and a certain standard of size are as a rule considered equally desirable, where the ditches are wide and the ground deep.) Lord Middleton breeds nearly all the horses required in his establishment; and the men are mounted entirely upon animals whose pedigrees would do no discredit to Newmarket. The smaller stock are brought into use for the wolds; the larger are told off for the low country—the result being that for all purposes the men are mounted as well as, probably better than, with any hunt in the three kingdoms. The lighter horses do their work well on the hills; while the stronger easily carry their allotted burdens over the stiffest of the country. Some of them would be considered up to fully thirteen stone anywhere; and this, be it remembered, is far more than the

ordinary hunt-servant is supposed, or allowed, to weigh. You and I, reader, may run to leg or flesh to any reasonable extent, without finding ourselves barred from the hunting-field. But it is not so with a hunt-servant. His occupation—save in a few exceptional and invaluable instances—departs with his title to be considered a light-weight. Certainly he would be far out of the category if Lord Middleton's thoroughbreds were inadequate to carrying him.

The stables and breeding-stud at Birdsall are in their way just as interesting and perfect as the kennels: and all three are alike remarkable for the fashion and quality of their contents. In the long stable a dozen stalls in a row show occupants with all the breeding of racehorses, and yet with the muscular development of hunters called upon to do long days. At the stud farm high blood is a characteristic noticeable, in the brood mares and stallions, down to the four-year-olds just about to enter upon their work. And both here and in the kennel recent years show the addition of more and more bone. The kennels were built by the late lord some five-and-twenty years ago; and, besides being roomy and complete, occupy a warm and sunny position not far from the House. The pack was formed at a very distant date; and the kennel books go back as far as 1764, when Sir Thomas Gascoigne was Master. After him came a Duke of Hamilton (1773), to be succeeded by Mr. Fox-Lane. Mr. Willoughby (afterwards Lord Middleton) had the hounds in 1789; and Sir Mark Sykes for nearly thirty years at the commencement of the present century. The late Sir Tatton Sykes held the master-

ship for some twenty years previous to 1853, when the late Lord Middleton took it over—the present Master succeeding to office in 1877. For new blood of late years the pack is chiefly beholden to the Brocklesby, the Bramham Moor, and the Belvoir. As with the horses, it is found that the smaller hounds act best upon the uplands; and accordingly it is generally arranged that the distant hills should be reserved as their position.

Friday in each week, taking in the whole of the eastern wold country, includes also the strip of vale along the extreme north, on the bank of the Derwent. Between Ganton and the sea there is much boggy grass, or carr land, unsuited for riding, and seldom touched by a fox. But about Yeddingham is all good sound going; though, with the exception of a few small plantations below Scampston, there are, unfortunately, no coverts till Miss Newton's Whin is reached—whence a run over the flat is possible.

The other days of the week on which Lord Middleton's hounds take the field are Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. The first named is for the home-country; Wednesday is for the York vale; and Saturday is devoted to the north-west. The home circuit includes, in addition to the light undulating country that lies between Birdsall and the town of Malton (best known in connection with the training grounds of John Scott and I'Anson), the whole of the rough western edge of the wolds, down to Pocklington. For the latter district Birdsall itself is a common fixture, as also is Settrington. Meeting at Millington Wood, they have a great extent of young

plantation to draw. Garreby Hill Top is for Garreby Wood; while Sledmere with its mass of coverts will almost provide a day of itself. When Fimber Village is named, the last-named woods are again likely to be the scene of most of the work; with Payne's Slack, a long larch strip, as an additional draw. Langton Wold (the site of the old racecourse, and still a training-ground — whereon Blair Athol and Blink Bonny did their gallops) is a meet for a few small whin coverts as a preface to the woods on the wold-side.

Wednesday takes in the low country—the vale of York and of the Derwent—in the main a much stiffer soil and better scenting ground than anything on the east. The fences too are stronger, and the ditches deep and wide—while plough still prevails. Below Bransby and Castle Howard (both of which stand on higher ground) the vale begins in its pleasantest form; and Farlington is, perhaps, the best meet of the Hunt. All round it there is a considerable amount of grass; and that it offers more than a fair sample of the York hunting grounds was shown by the fact that the Ninth Lancers, when quartered at that city, pitched upon it as the scene of their steeplechases. From the small covert at Farlington a fox is most likely to strike upwards to the hills and woods about Bransby; but he may, on the other hand, elect to run across to Sheriff Hutton, a very similar meet and covert. And the same choice, *mutatis mutandis,* is open to a fox from the latter place. A sandy interval in the vale is found in Stockton Forest and Strensall Common, a wide extent of rough moor, to draw which the

ordinary meet is the Fourth Milestone on the Forest. Kexby Wood (Lord Wenlock's) is one of the nearest fixtures to York; and Aldby Park (Mr. Darley's) and Sand Hutton (Sir J. Walker's) are on the same side of the river, with some big woods belonging to those gentlemen between Strensall and Buttercrambe. Sutton Wood and Allerthorpe Common, across the Derwent towards Pocklington, give a corner of the country in the far south that is held to be extremely good. After these two woods Catton Common is to be drawn (whence at one time foxes would frequently make long points on to the wolds); and on the way towards Kennels is an excellent new whin covert recently planted at Catton by Mr. Darley. From Buttercrambe Bridge they would draw some small coverts, *e.g.*, Coal Wharf, and thence on to Lippington Wood and the Thackers; while Westow is for Howsham Wood—the latter a fine old wood, with deep rides through its stiff clay.

But the best scenting and most sporting division of the country from a huntsman's point of view is the western district—the wooded hills that run between Malton and Gilling. A great chain of wood covers nearly the whole northern summit—oak being the principal timber, except about Gilling, where larch and Scotch fir again become prominent. These woodlands, as indeed the whole of the country, are very amply stocked with foxes. When the leaf is once down, and still more when a fall of snow has cleansed the ground beneath the trees, a good scent is generally met with, both in covert and out. The soil is a strong one; and the valleys are clay. From Bransby or

thereabouts a fox may possibly dip into the vale and make his way towards Easingwold; but he is much more likely to keep to the hills and woods, which continue from Gilling, by Hovingham (Sir W. Worsley), Conesthorpe, &c., to Castle Howard (Lord Carlisle). Newburgh Park (the residence of Sir George Wombwell), which with its coverts, is in Lord Middleton's country, has been lent to the Sinnington, and forms a most valuable addition to their territory.

THE SINNINGTON.*

A GOOD country, and an old one, with a trencher-fed pack—is an anomaly, or at all events a curiosity, to be found scarcely anywhere else in this year of 1883. Yet such is The Sinnington. Its antiquity as a country is shown by the fact that the Duke of Buckingham hunted in it as long ago as 1668. The lines of a local and primitive poet of that time are still sung in the Hunt—the first verse of his song running as follows:

'Twas early one morning as I rode in the dawning
I heard of some famous fine hunting
Betwixt some gentlemen and the Duke of Buckingham,
So early as they rode a hunting.

About 1690 the Duncombe family bought the Helmsley Castle and estate from the Duke's executors. The present Lord Feversham, following the example of his ancestors, is now the chief supporter of the Hunt; of which the late Lord Helmsley—whose early death was a grief from Yorkshire to Leicestershire, and wherever men knew him—would no doubt have sooner or later become Master.

The Sinnington Hunt is still constituted as a club; and by yearly custom makes its vitality patent in the

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 5, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

form of a dinner and a ball. Conviviality was ever a feature in its existence; and at one time contributed in a large degree towards the object for which the Hunt Club was called into being. Thus, in years gone by, the death of a fox was always held an occasion to be celebrated by the adjournment of all hands to the nearest hostelry, with a view to dinner and song. Fines were rigidly exacted, and devoted to the expenses of the Hunt. Thus any member not up at the kill was mulcted in the sum of five shillings; and every member not dining had to forfeit half a crown. The annual subscription to the club was sixteen shillings; and the funds were further augmented by the receipt of five shillings from the hands of the churchwarden of the parish wherein each fox was killed. In like way the keepers of the period received a shilling from the same official for the body of each *foumart*. The foumart or fummard is now quite extinct in Yorkshire, as the fox no doubt would also have been by now, but for the loyal co-operation of the good yeomen who worked so hard, and feasted so freely, to gain the parish bounty. The "Sinnington New Hunting Song" of fifty years ago illustrates this, their very laudable habit and custom:

At Wrelton's hospitable board
The Hunters at their leisure
Drink to the foxhounds that afford
This noble English pleasure,
Then homeward go, each his own way,
With spirits gay and hearty;
And when they've such another day
May we be of the party.

What to do with horses and hounds on such occasions

might be a problem to us nowadays, but offered little difficulty to them then. Their horses—said to have been generally a small rough and hardy sort—were all unclipped, and would look upon a corner of a barn and a bucket of oats as quite sufficient luxury; while as to the hounds they no doubt acted much as the Sinnington pack of the present time, viz., when the day's work is over,

Homeward go, each his own way.

The huntsman of that period, or even later, was paid about fifty pounds a year, out of which he was expected to mount himself. And his whip also took the field on similar terms at a lower ratio. The same conditions, only on a considerably higher scale of pay, continue to form a part of the system of the Hunt up to the present day—Parker receiving an honorarium little, if anything, in excess of a huntsman's pay in the cut-'em-down countries, and out of it he has to keep and provide himself and a couple of horses. This, with such extraneous help as the gods from time to time may shower upon him, Jack Parker has succeeded in doing for three-and-thirty years—both his appearance and his reputation proving that the task has been well within his capacity. If, as local belief has it, he was really the original, famous Handley Cross huntsman, he has certainly grown out of the hollow features and half-starved limbs with which Mr. Leech depicted James Pigg. Yet nationality, dialect, humour, and natural instinct for his calling, all combine to enforce his claim to a character that could only have been drawn from some living type. In the field he is said to be still as hard and keen as he, or his mighty

prototype, ever was: while, to show that he contrives to mount himself in a style quite equal to his work, it has only to be mentioned that for one of his two present hunters he has repeatedly refused an offer of a hundred and twenty pounds.

Some four-and-twenty couple of hounds constitute the present Sinnington pack; and the whole of these, with the passing exception of a few brood-matrons and whelps, are walked at out-quarters. Small kennels have been built at Kirby Moorside; whither the young hounds are brought in March for preliminary discipline, and where during the season the whole pack is collected each day before hunting. It might be thought that the latter would be a work of difficulty; but it is always effected with the greatest ease by Parker, and his son, who go round the quarters each Monday and Friday. The hounds know the object of the visit perfectly; and are only too delighted to avail themselves of the expected outing. Should a hound be absent with his foster-master when the kennel official calls, he is nearly certain—if of any experience—to recognise either that the visit has been made or that the time has passed when it should have been; so trots off to the kennel of his own accord. The scent that tells him of some of his comrades having passed would probably be his clue in the former case. In the latter he is only obeying the force of habit, and his instinctive delight in the sport. Who shall say that the faculties of a foxhound do not almost amount to reasoning power, when it is added that, should the weather appear so unfit for hunting that no steps are taken to collect the pack, yet almost all the old hounds

will muster at the kennels before nightfall on a Monday and Friday. It may be that some portion of the strong attraction lies in the fondness for himself with which Parker is credited with imbuing his hounds; but whether as a striking instance of custom's second nature or of a foxhound's appreciation of sport, this behaviour cannot but be of interest. While out for their day's hunting they are said to be singularly well under control, and such a thing as a hound's sulking, or going off to his home, is unheard of. They will work *con amore* keen and untiringly; then when fully satisfied that the huntsman has ceased operations for the day and will draw no more, they drop off one by one as they reach the point nearest their respective quarters, till at length he and his whip reach kennels alone. A trencher-fed pack cannot of course be expected to maintain the same uniformity of condition that is looked for in kennel-fed hounds. Even the hour and the quantity of the last feed before hunting must differ in almost each individual instance; while the daily portion—in most cases lavish enough—must equally be expected to vary. So it would be out of the question to aim at absolute regularity of pace and work in a pack thus constituted. On the other hand it is maintained that trencher-fed hounds possess much more courage and determination than those pent up in kennel and only walked out under discipline. A certain independence of character is not unlikely to be the accompaniment of this extra courage—but, let this be as it may, there is no doubt that, the longer and harder the day, the closer and more regularly does the Sinnington pack work together. The material of

which it is composed is good enough. The liberality of Mr. Lane-Fox and other neighbouring Masters fills up the vacancies that the home bred entry is inadequate to make good. The latter means of supply is on a limited scale; but what it produces is from old and good sources. Not the worst of the home produce, by the way, it may be mentioned, consists at this moment of two generations of Quorn Alfred stock—dating their origin to the time when that hound was shown with such success in the north. The present Master of the Sinnington is (as for the last four years) that fine old sportsman and well known authority on hounds and horses, Mr. Thomas Parrington; who has settled down to live about a mile from the head-quarters of the pack at Kirby Moorside.

It may be generally supposed by the outer—at all events the southern and distant—world, that the Sinnington is a rough moorland country, such as forms the hunting ground of various other, and minor, trencher-fed packs in the North of England. But this is by no means correct. The bulk of the Sinnington country lies on the cultivated slope and alluvial flat, *below* what are known as the North York Moors. Only on the northern edge of this slope does it merge into moorland; and, though hounds frequently find themselves running up on to heather from the high ground, there are only some two or three meets whence they start at once upon it. The wild upper moors which represent the great grouse shootings of Lord Feversham—and the bulk which, it will be noticed, are left uncoloured in Stanford's Map—are hunted by two small hill packs, viz., the

Farndale and the Bilsdale. At about the farthest line to which the Sinnington carry their operations, the hills give a sudden drop before rising again still higher northward to form the watershed of these moorland heights. The character and situation of the Sinnington Country may therefore be thus explained. A number of streams run directly, and at almost regular intervals, southward from this watershed—all pointing towards Lord Middleton's country, till, before reaching it, they all form one bed and one valley in the river Derwent. The chief of these streams—or "becks"—are the Rye, the Riccal, the Hodge, the Dove, and the Seven; and each of these, commencing as a mere burn on the moors, cuts a deep dale down the slope—till, as it nears the lower ground, its dale opens widely and gently out, and all its highland roughness disappears in the quiet undulations. So not only does most of the Sinnington country present a most civilised and cultivated appearance; but the greater part is far smoother riding than any of the hills of High Leicestershire. The becks are not easy to cross; and the higher they are followed the rougher do their banks become. Their wooded sides form almost the only covert of the higher ground, and they harbour a race of foxes as stout and wild as any south of the Tweed. The vale has a certain number of whins more or less dependable; and some of the more recent ones hold out considerable promise. All the lower ground is divided into small enclosures, with thorn and timber fences of just sufficient size to prompt and promote the enjoyment of both horse and rider, to teach a young one and

maintain the powers of the old. A great deal of it, too, is laid down in grass; the plough is seldom, if ever, very deep; and as a scenting country the Sinnington may fairly lay claim to being "better than most."

The Sinnington Vale—or the vale of the Rye—extends from the bank of the little river Costa near Pickering (where it joins Capt. Johnstone's territory) to about Oswaldkirk and Helmsley on the west. Beyond these the scene changes to the Hambleton Hills, which overlook the town of Thirsk and the Vale of York. The maps referred to are not very precise as to the boundaries of the Sinnington country hereabouts. But it will be sufficient to note that the Hunt claim Kilburn and Hood Hill as within their margin in this direction; and that Sir George Wombwell's fine coverts at Newburgh Park are, with the consent of Lord Middleton, allowed to be drawn by them. Above Helmsley are numerous great overhanging coverts up the course of the Rye, past Duncombe Park and Rievaulx Abbey; and similar strong woods run up the sides of Riccal Dale, Sleightolm-Dale (the bed of the river Hodge), and the Dale of the Seven, &c.

Tuesday and Saturday being the days of hunting, the former is for the low ground, the latter for the upper country. On a Tuesday they draw little else but whins and small plantations, except the Newburgh Park coverts, from which they have had several capital runs in recent seasons. Towards Pickering they meet at Normanby to draw Normanby Whin. Below this is Habton Whin—for which they would probably meet

at Newsham Bridge. Muscoats Whin may be drawn from Harom, near which Lord Feversham planted this fine gorse some few years ago. It was from here that, about the year 1877, the famous run took place, which ended in hounds killing their fox at Yedingham Bridge on the Derwent—fifteen miles away as the crow flies. The scent was never strong nor the pace ever fast; but hounds worked their way unassisted throughout, and the late Lord Helmsley got to the end with one horse—Lord Castlereagh and Capt. C. Byng, who were also up, having managed to pick up second horses on the way. Near Nunnington they have the small wood of Caukless Bank; and above Sinnington they often find a fox in the rushy fields. On Saturday, when on the higher ground, they have, as already mentioned, much stronger coverts and more broken ground. Meeting at The Kennels they would draw Romsdale and Lingmoor; and from Tylar's Bridge they would go to the big larch woods of Skiplam. Riccal Bridge is the fixture for Riccal Dale; Helmsley for all the high ground above the town—while Gillamoor is one of the northern meets whence they draw the open heather, such as on Harland Moors, &c.

It is scarcely necessary to add that small fields are the invariable rule—five-and-twenty people being, perhaps, the outside number to meet hounds on the high ground, and fifty on the lower. For in the Sinnington country not only is there no large town; but the number of men of leisure and means resident in the district is small and widely scattered.

THE WHEATLAND.*

The western bank of the Severn, from Wellington down to Bewdley, provides the two-day-a-week country of the Wheatland Pack. On the other side the river is the Albrighton territory—and two more widely differing countries it would be difficult to conceive. Without driving the comparison through minor points, it is sufficient to put forward that whereas the Albrighton is practically and almost entirely flat, the Wheatland is formed altogether of great rolling hills and deep glens. In other words, the Severn here gets all its rush of water from the Wheatland side, and is fed only by quiet streams from the other. Or, for a third definition, the Wheatland is on the Welsh bank, the Albrighton is on lower and tamer ground. The hills and dales of the former are offshoots of a mountainous sphere which becomes more and more confirmed as you travel further west; while here on the east the river forms a main drain to carry off the water along its base. Two other points of comparison that may be brought forward are, first, that the Wheatland is the better scenting country of

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet , and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

the two; secondly, that it is infinitely more difficult to cross with hounds. It owns to none of the light weak-scenting soil that is found across the centre of the Albrighton; but whether on hill or dale, in covert or out, on grass or on plough, at least a fair scent may be expected whenever weather will allow of such a privilege. With the Albrighton, again, you may ride to hounds almost everywhere. It is very different in the Wheatland country. You may generally ride *after* them, it is true—but at what distance must too often depend upon the pace they are travelling, and on whether their fox is leading them straight. For though a way may be forced through the deep dingles; though brooks that cannot be jumped can generally be forded somewhere; and though the thickest-grown bank is seldom without a breach that may be stormed by determined leaders such as ride in the van of the Wheatland Hunt—yet all this involves time, and, when accomplished, probably leaves the successful ones with a killing ascent still to climb, and the driving pack already over the brow. To make the best of their way in pursuit of hounds, men cannot afford to lose a yard downhill; for in the valleys and up the hill-sides hounds seldom fail to gain upon them. On open ground they can carry out this principle to some purpose; but when the occasion involves a large overhanging covert—of the kind that abounds in the country—it becomes advisable, as in Devonshire, to wait awhile on the high ground till the pack points out a definite direction. In fact, as in all hilly countries, the maxim that it is "easy enough to get down, but difficult enough to get up," must ever be

borne in mind; and effectually to aid this, a knowledge of the country is absolutely necessary. These deep and difficult dingles are, indeed, the great feature of a country that without them would be amenable enough to a good horse and horseman. They exist everywhere; and in the far south assume overgrown and complicated proportions, such as to render the Wyre Forest an almost unhuntable region. The only exceptions are in the case of Corve Dale and Ape Dale—the former a pretty but narrow vale that develops considerably as it runs down into Ludlow territory; the latter a deep wet valley on the north-west, beneath Wenlock Edge, and on the borders of The Shropshire.

The southern half of the country is much the rougher, more broken and wooded. The upper has a great deal more open and better riding ground. The fences, which, like the soil, are as a rule lighter on the hills than in the valleys, are generally thick, untrimmed hedges on banks—guarded, very often, with a strong double ditch. A horse accustomed to the country—knowing when to jump and when to creep—is the only pleasurable mount. A rash, unhandy steed would be no luxury, either at his fences in the open, or in making his way through wood and dingle. For climbing the hills and for carrying a man with credit and comfort here, a strong-backed well-bred horse of from fifteen hands to fifteen two is by far the best conveyance. The hedges, it should be mentioned, are built as much of hazel as of thorn, and are seldom laid-and-bound, though careful farming does not fail to insist on the gaps being stoutly made

up with wattle and thorns. The land, mostly a rich red loam, is about equally divided between grass and plough—the former always, the latter generally, giving hounds every chance of driving their game. The woods, like most others, improve greatly in their scenting properties as the season advances. They consist almost entirely of oak with a sprinkling of larch, the undercovert being grass and brambles. Their size and frequency call for strong working qualities on the part of hounds (which the Wheatland pack possesses in no slight degree); for, though the supply of foxes is good and a blank day a rarity almost unknown, the woodlands necessarily take a great deal of drawing—with, likely enough, a most tiring run to ensue.

Great coverts, and many—in some parts too many—of them, form a prominent characteristic of the Wheatland country. They succeed each other closely all down the bank of the Severn, cluster thickly about the southern or Kinlet district, and become continuous and unmanageable in the rough regions of Wyre Forest. In the north-east again, are the extensive coverts of Lord Forester; while in Mogg Forest and along the steep side of Wenlock Edge they follow each other almost in a mass. The widest and most open ground—as it is probably the highest—is the Meadowley Hill Range, which, commencing about Harpsford, spreads across the heart of the country by Morvill, and round above Monk Hopton, Oxenbold and Holgate, into The Ludlow. Well-foxed and very sporting, it shares with Corve Dale and Wenlock Edge Wood (which also run down parallel with it far over the

border into Ludlow territory) the credit of showing the Wheatland Hunt their best sport. South of it, and dating from its slope in this direction, the streams and dingles that cut up the lower half of the country, mostly take their origin.

The kennels—unpretentious in appearance, but healthy and well situated—are just above the little village of Eardington, some two miles from Bridgnorth (on the Great Western Railway, five and a half hours' journey from London). About twenty-five couple of excellent working hounds form the pack, towards the breeding of which the blood of The Cheshire and Shropshire Kennels has chiefly contributed. The qualifications most needed in hounds for a hilly strong-wooded country are unmistakably marked in their free sloping shoulders, strong backs, and sturdy frames. Well-pronounced and reliable tongue is also a true essential here—and the management pride themselves on never keeping a second-rate hound as a mere ornamental addition to the kennel. The direction of the Hunt affairs has for the last ten or eleven years been entirely in the hands of a committee—though I believe I am right in saying that they would gladly abrogate their functions in favour of a resident and zealous master, such for instance as their neighbours the Ludlow possess in Mr. C. Wicksted. A country so sporting, well preserved, and good-scenting—with a most suitable pack of hounds ready to hand, and a fair subscription—should hold out strong inducements to many a man really fond of foxhunting, and not bound by insurmountable ties to some other locality.

A glance at the map shows at once the leading natural divisions of the Wheatland country. The hog's-back ridge of Wenlock Edge runs, with its almost continuous range of wood, all along its north-west border; another minor range of covert lies immediately parallel with it in Mogg Forest; then comes the grassy, stiffly-fenced vale of Corvedale; and again parallel, the strongly undulating surface of the Meadowley Hills. Below the Edge is a narrow flat, consisting chiefly of wet boggy grass, on to which hounds occasionally dip, but more often only to turn back after a few fields. A good road along the top enables pursuers to maintain their hold upon the chase, till they can judge of the direction a fox means to take. In this lower strip are two or three small coverts—*e.g.*, Lushcott Gorse and Oak Wood (belonging to Mr. R. Benson, of Lutwych). Between the Edge and Corvedale the Burton Hills start from Wenlock, and run into Mogg Forest (which reaches from about Brockton to Stanway). Corve Dale only commences its course near Monk Hopton—Acton Round beyond being again on high ground. And between Acton Round and the Burton Hills are the Spoonhill coverts of Lord Wenlock. On the Meadowley Hills the principal coverts are the Hill Wood itself (belonging to Mr. Pelham of Cound), Light Wood, Middleton Gorse, Netchwood Gorse, and Powkes-More (Mr. Howard's). Between the Meadowley Hill Range and the Severn, again, is a northern corner of good upland country, with the Aldenham coverts (Lord Acton's) and the Willey Coverts (Lord Forester's)—Shirlett being the principal wood of the latter group.

Great coverts, as above mentioned, follow the course of the Severn. Traps Rock, Homer Common, and Farley Common carry on the chain from the verge of Wenlock Edge Wood; and we then come to Lord Forester's mass of riverside woods—Tick Wood, Wyke, Benthall Edge to Coalport Wood and Caughley Big Woods. Travelling southward along the Severn Bank, we find The Rookery and Chesnut Coppice (Mr. W. O. Foster's), the Stanley coverts (Sir Henry Tyrwhitt's), and Severn Hall.

Below Bridgnorth, and in the southern half of the country, are Cliff Cop, Eardington Forge, the Hampton and the Highley coverts—which brings us down to the Forest. From any of these latter riverside coverts a fox may eventually break over the hill with "three courses open to him," viz., to make for Kinlet (where are large woods belonging to the Childe family), and thence find his way to the Forest; or, secondly, to steer by Billingsley (the Duke of Cleveland's), Chorley, Stottesdon, and the Sidbury coverts (Mr. Cresswell's), and round, possibly, to Kinlet and the Forest; or, thirdly, to take the line of the Chelmarsh Bottoms (a string of covert along the Borle Mill Brook, from Highley to Woodlands). The stream of the Rea on the west, it may be mentioned, is, unlike the other brooks, fairly free from covert.

For the two days of hunting the country is held to be divided between the Bridgnorth side (the south and east) and the Corvedale side. Tuesday being for the former—Morvill is the meet that most often takes in on that day the Meadowley Hill Range and the Aldenham coverts; Willey is fixed for the woods

thereabouts; Nordley for the Stanley and Apley series; and Lindley for the woods of Caughley. Glazeley is generally chosen for the Chelmarsh Bottoms; Billingsley for its solid coverts on hill and dale and for those of Chorley; the Eagle-and-Serpent for the Kinlet coverts (some hundreds of acres in extent); and Chelmarsh for the many smaller coverts of Hampton and neighbourhood.

On a Friday Much-Wenlock may be the meet for the day's work that the Edge-Wood is always capable of affording; Wyke for the covert of that name and Benthall and Tickwood; and Brockton for Mogg Forest. For the last-named and adjoining coverts Patton (the residence of Mr. E. H. Davies, Hon. Sec. to the Hunt) is also the meet at least once in the season; and never fails to draw together one of the largest fields of the year. The muster with the Wheatland, by the way, seldom exceeds fifty, even in the vicinity of Wenlock or Bridgnorth. For the more southern portion of the Edge Wood, and for the several small coverts of Preen, the more frequent fixture is The Five Chimneys, Presthope. Monk Hopton points to Netchwood Gorse and Middleton Gorse, &c., and Weston to Oxenbold and Neenton Gorse—while Ditton Priors may be for Powkes-More and the rough gorse-besprinkled Clee Hill.

THE UNITED PACK.*

If the Wheatland Country and many parts of the Ludlow are difficult to ride, that of the United Pack requires still more circumspection, and insists upon much more widely divided action between hounds and horsemen. It is another step nearer Wales. Its hills are loftier, steeper, and more closely contiguous: while their heather-clad summits have in many cases quite a moorland aspect. The valleys—highly cultivated, neatly and strongly fenced—are yet much narrower and offer less scope for an open gallop with hounds. The woods, very large and very numerous, are mostly spread along steep hillsides in a fashion that entirely precludes riding with hounds through them, and that would probably involve any stranger—attempting to work on his own resources—in hopeless confusion. For all that, the United Pack has a good hound-country—and as such it must be accepted by all who would hunt there, the ambition of mere riding being altogether out of the question. But, when hounds break covert down an open hillside, it is won-

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 14, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

derful how some of their hardiest followers will dash down the steep pitches in their wake, and make the most of the turf and arable that line the valleys. They find plenty of jumping in that brief interval too; for every inclosure is carefully and closely fenced. Thick thorn-and-hazel hedges separate field from field—a bank of varying size generally forming a base, but the ditches as a rule insignificant. When these fences are cut-and-bound, as they frequently are, they become, with the help of the bank, quite sufficient to test the jumping power of the best of horses. But, as already said, many of the dingles are too steep, and many of the woods too dense and extensive, to allow of following hounds at once. Then there is nothing for it but to keep to the upper ground as long as possible, and ride for a point. The Hunt know pretty well the run of foxes in certain directions; and three times out of four will reach that point as soon as hounds. It is only by this knowledge that they can keep a hold upon the pack at all—as anyone, to take quite a mild instance, who has ridden between the wooded face of Black Hill and the woodlands of the opposite ridges of Walcot, Radnor, &c., will readily understand. A stranger, gazing upon the country with feelings not altogether remote from awe, cannot but breath a tribute of admiration to the pluck and perseverance animating the good sportsmen who have so long and so successfully kept foxhunting going in these hilly regions. A pack of hounds possessing many sterling qualities was maintained by the same family—the Beddoes of Longville Castle — for over a century (allowing for the intervening reign of Mr. Robert

Luthers, who added much to the fame of the pack), and eventually about seven seasons ago, it came into the hands of Mr. Harris of Pentre Nant—who had for twenty-five years been connected with it, and who, while retaining the old blood in kennel, has not failed to seek fresh strains from neighbouring kennels. The extent of country hunted has been very largely increased of late years—side by side with the great increase in the area of highland that has come under cultivation—till the United Pack now wanders over a district that is quite roomy enough for a second, or a much larger, establishment. Two days a week, with an occasional bye, are scarcely enough for a stretch of country exceeding twenty miles each way. There is no necessary limit to their sphere of operations on the Welsh—or Montgomeryshire—side; but, practically, the United Hunt do not work much farther than Newtown, Powis Castle Park, and Welshpool. Beyond this area—the ground becoming rougher and more mountainous as you go—are only some few small hill packs, kept by the farmers—who, everywhere in this and the neighbouring counties, would seem to be exceptionally hearty in backing up the traditional sport.

No better proof of the scenting quality of this wild hill country need be sought than is furnished in the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society for the present year. The Earl of Cathcart in his admirable article on half-bred horses quotes at full length the catalogue of sale of the Horses used with the Montgomeryshire Foxhounds, and sold at Welshpool in 1826. No. 10 is set down as having "for two years

gone through the harassing service of breaking in young hounds, and been a chief means of bringing the Montgomeryshire hounds to *kill fifty-four foxes out of sixty-three found last season" ! !* What say you to that, Messrs. Treadwell, Bob Ward, and George Carter ?

The tops of the hills, where cultivation has not yet reached them, are in most instances crowned with heather and sprinkled with gorse—often thickly enough to form strong covert in addition to that so bountifully supplied by the woods on their slope and base. The unturned ground of these uplands always carries an excellent scent ; and the smoother summits are also good easy riding. In many cases, however,—notably on the wide ridge of Clun Forest—smooth-sailing is much broken in upon by the wire fences of the sheep farms.

One of the stiffest and steepest ranges is the Long-mynd (about seventeen hundred feet in height), the crest of which is some ten miles long and is freely clad with heather and gorse. The top, however, is excellent riding, except where broken in upon by the various dingles. On the side overlooking Church Stretton its slope is so sudden and severe that to ride down is at scarcely any point held to be feasible ; and, if obliged to descend, men are forced to lead their horses down the declivity as best they can. Other great hills on this side, such as Caer Caradoc to the east (actually in Shropshire territory, but drawn on sufferance by The United) and rocky Stiperstone more to the west, give a grand picturesqueness to the scenery that appeals to any eye more gratefully than

to that of the insensate and material foxhunter. To him a landscape recommends itself in inverse ratio to its wild and rugged beauty. He will gaze with content and even rapture on a monotonous sea of green, such as for instance is offered to him at the scene of the Rugby, Melton, or Aylesbury Steeplechases; while from glorious woods and majestic hills he will turn with a sense of dread, or even of absolute dislike.

The woodlands of The United consist, like those of The Wheatland, almost entirely of oak and larch; and, with scarcely an exception, they are plentifully stocked with foxes. The kennels are at Clun, about nine miles from Craven Arms—a station on the line between Leominster and Shrewsbury. As a central point from which to command the three countries of The United, The Wheatland, and The Ludlow, Craven Arms is excellently placed. Moreover, the three hunts are on the best of terms, and do all in their power for mutual convenience. The road from Craven Arms to the United kennels makes its way along the foot of some of the strongest coverts of the Hunt, for instance, those of Sibdon, and, then immediately adjoining each other, Oaker and Barrow.

Mr. Wicksted (the Ludlow) here runs a corner into the United, and draws Clunbury and Hopton Park. The United Pack, however, draws the Purslow Woods (Mr. Pardoe's) and the big wood of Soudley (Mr. P. Morris's) which stretches up the face of the Black Hill, opposite Clun. Beyond this, towards the south, is the wood of Bryn Eddin; then comes the gorse and heath-covered surface of Caractacus Camp, Gaer Ditches, and the large woods of Coed Ditton and

Kinsley. Working up the bank of the Teme, which constitutes the southern boundary of the country, we get to Selly Hall, and at the back Trevward with its gorse and scrub, and, higher up, Coed ye Hendre and Redwood. On the top of the hill range hereabouts are the Garn Rocks, with gorse and heather freely scattered over the rough surface; and near them the Hergan Plantation. Some of the pleasantest riding—and best scenting ground—in the Hunt is found on the high and heather covered plateau of Clun Forest, in spite of the too frequent wires which cross and subdivide its face in the interests of sheep feeding.

Near Kerry are the hilly coverts of Kerry Pole, and various other similar woods in its immediate neighbourhood. Eastward, again, of these are the Long Plantation and the Riddings (Rev. W. Garnet-Botfield's), with other plantations belonging to Lord Powis. The country between Kerry and Bishop's Castle is, it may be noted, all excessively hilly, except *viâ* the Churchstoke valley; but on the other side of Bishop's Castle more cultivation and more practicable ground are found for a space. To the north, in the direction of Churchstoke, is Pentre Nant, the residence of Mr. J. Harris, the Master, with strong coverts in its vicinity; and two other notable woods are those known as Mainstone and Blakeridge.

About Bishop's Castle hedges and banks have a better chance, though coverts of considerable size are still prevalent—as for instance Oakeley Wood (the property of Mr. Oakeley, a good supporter of the Hunt), those of Mr. Plowden (a like staunch preserver), and at Horderley. North of these are Linley Wood (Mr.

More's), and the lofty and rocky Steiperstone. Overlooking Church Stretton is the Longmynd Mountain above described. Running under Wenlock Edge is a nice but narrow strip of wet vale; and between this and Church Stretton are the Hope Bowdley coverts, and those of Helmeth and Ragleth. The United draw the Edge Wood conjointly with the Wheatland as far as Pilgrim's Lane; while they hunt on Caer Caradoc by permission of The Shropshire.

The Montgomeryshire side of the country demands about one day a fortnight—and on these occasions the hounds are brought overnight to the Master's residence at Pentre Nant, in the same way as for the lower country they are taken to Church Stretton. High, cold, and rough is this Montgomeryshire district, though it has many good coverts and many good patrons—*e.g.* Wotherton (Sir Offley Wakeman's) and Gumley Wood (Mrs. Price's). Rough heather distinguishes the Long Mountain and Welsh Harp. The Black Bank coverts, again, belong to Lord Powis; and the Leighton coverts to Mr. Naylor. Crossing the Severn to Welshpool we find The Relts, and Powis Castle Park with its extensive coverts. Finally, there are great rough woodlands at Pantyfrydd.

For hunting purposes the country is looked upon as consisting of three divisions, viz., the Montgomeryshire side, the "lower country," or Church Stretton side, and, thirdly, the "middle country," or Clun and Bishop's Castle district. The first two divisions are allotted one day a fortnight each, the "middle country" one day a week. Wednesday and Saturday are the hunting days; the former usually taking in the distant

fixtures, the latter being devoted to those nearer home —with a byeday thrown in occasionally. Of the meets, which are many and various, the following are some of the most frequent—Clun, Walcot Park, Lydbury, Aston, Purslow, Clunton, Kinsley, Trevward, Newcastle, Kerry and Kerry Pole, Moat Gate, Bishop's Castle, Horderley Station and Lydham. For the lower country Church Stretton and Rushbury Station are the most common; while for Montgomeryshire Hockleton Bridge, Fordin, Powis-Castle-Park, and Berriew are among the best known.

In spite of all difficulties in the way of riding, a much larger field turns out regularly with the United Pack than would be supposed—a muster of a hundred being by no means uncommon near the eastern border. The horse for the country, it is almost needless to add, is in all respects the same as for the Wheatland or the Ludlow.

THE CHIDDINGFOLD.*

A COUNTRY quite near London, the Chiddingfold in yet anything but the resort of cockneydom. A quiet little Hunt in a nook between the Surrey Union, Mr. Combe, Lord Leconfield, and the Crawley and Horsham, its sphere is limited to the edge of the Surrey Hills, and to the earliest strip of the Weald which crosses the south of that county and the north of Sussex. Its coverts are too extensive and too closely packed to allow much scope for a gallop, or for the disporting of such a multitude as finds an outlet with the Queen's. It has an open corner in the south-east, in the neighbourhood of Cranleigh; and there is more room, again, in the extreme north, between Godalming and Puttenham. The Cranleigh corner takes the type of the more open parts of the Crawley and Horsham country; and the fences, besides being more strongly built, are guarded with ditches. But elsewhere, whether on the light soil of the hills or the stiff clay of the weald, the Chiddingfold is without doubt a very "woody" country. Its hills are, with the exception of The Devil's Punchbowl, not so rough—nor is

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 22, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

heather anything like so plentiful—as with Mr. Richard Combe; though the fir woods of the upper ground are very similar to those which so freely adorn his hunting grounds. All the upper country of the Chiddingfold is very hilly, in addition to being thickly-wooded; but it is only on the extreme west that it partakes of that rough heathery type so familiar to every man whose lines have been cast at Aldershot. The lower country to the south has still more extensive woods; but they stand on much more level ground and in a deeper soil—while in character they are akin to the large hazel-and-sapling coverts of Kent and Sussex, whose deep narrow rides mostly depend for their course upon the requirements of the wood-cutter's carts in the past summer. Here and there a ride may have been widened to an extent that will give the gunner a fair chance at the rabbits as they scuttle across; but game preserving is not, as a rule, carried on extravagantly or universally. Several instances there are, as must always occur in the vicinity of London, of coverts being let to men who care nothing for foxhunting; and who, however meagre their own sport may be, are quite careless of avoiding a clash of interests—in other words, are only too ready to leave the question of foxes and pheasants (either or both) in the unscrupulous hands of keepers. There is less excuse for such culpable selfishness here than in certain other countries whose special attribute is game—(and where such indifference, or even antagonism, on the part of an individual to the sport of the community is often loudly and justly condemned)—for Surrey is nowhere a game country;

and the few obstructionists who hire their shooting here get no great return for their money.

On the whole, though, the Chiddingfold country is anything but short of foxes; and it is said to own a fuller supply at the present time than ever since it acquired a separate existence. The farmers are extremely friendly to the sport; and so are the resident landowners. A change of Mastership has just taken place—Mr. C. B. Godman, who re-established the Hunt about the year 1876, and has since carried it on with ever-increasing success, having just handed over the reins to Mr. Ellis Gosling of Busbridge. Previous to Mr. Godman starting hounds, the Surrey Union for three years hunted the district—the Sadler family having for some twenty years before kept a pack, to work not only this piece of country, but much of Mr. Combe's present territory, even as far as Pirbright.

The present Chiddingfold territory commences at Guildford, and runs under the Hog's-Back, as far as Puttenham, half way to Aldershot. Going southward, it includes Godalming and Haslemere; marches with Lord Leconfield along the south; and takes in Cranleigh on the east—the Surrey Union granting Hurtwood, and Lord Leconfield conceding some woodland on his border. The soldiers from the Camp are usually represented at the few meets between Godalming and Puttenham, and along the western border; but the Chiddingfold field is invariably a small one, though the 9.30 a.m. train from Waterloo will set man and horse down at either Guildford or Godalming within the hour.

The roughest piece of the whole country is of course about The Devil's Punchbowl, in the hill above Haslemere—of which Hindhead is the loftiest point (nearly a thousand feet). Whether on the side of the Chiddingfold or Mr. Combe's, this neighbourhood is a strong sample of wild hill and heather. A sprinkling of heather is also to be found about Hurtwood, on the other side of the country; but with this exception it is limited entirely to the western edge.

From Haslemere to the east is all clay—the Surrey hills coming no further than Witley and Hascombe. In this dip not only are foxes most numerous, but they run stoutest and leave the best scent. But nowhere with the Chiddingfold is killing a fox an easy matter. In the upper half of the country he can too often run them out of scent: while in the vale the chances are in favour of his being able to shift his responsibilities before he is tired—in both cases the number and propinquity of the coverts being all in his favour.

Stout, short-legged, and *useful* (the definition of the term as given in "Market Harboro'" not to be taken too closely) is the description of horse required. He must be strong enough to make his way comfortably through the deep rides of the woodlands, or to mount the tiring hills of the uplands. It is, to say the least, quite as necessary that he should be able to creep as that he should know how to jump—for over the greater part of the country he will seldom be called upon to do more in the fencing line than scramble over a bank. The fences on the Surrey hills are everywhere insignificant; though, as already mentioned, there are some pieces of the lower ground—especially

where grass is interspersed—which are both hedged and ditched.

The kennels are at Park Hatch near Godalming; and the hounds—a comparatively recently formed pack, but one in which the requirements of a woodland country have been carefully borne in mind—were handed over, with the country, from the possession of the late to that of the new Master.

The following are some of the chief meets and coverts. In the north-west corner Compton is the ordinary fixture, for Losely and Prior's Wood, near Puttenham. More towards the centre is Munstead Cross Roads for some fir woods in light sandy soil—where a find is pretty sure, though scent is very uncertain. Hascombe—the property of Mr. J. Godman, and thus, it is needless to add, extremely well preserved—is a very favourite place. It is a large, isolated, and very steep hill, on the edge of the sand and overlooking the clay, with a good covert on the top.

Leading coverts in the centre of the country are Highdown Heath, Unstead Woods, and those of Busbridge. There are good coverts too of Mr. Barrett's (another staunch preserver) at Wintershall; and also of Mr. Rowe's (who is equally careful of foxes) at Thorncombe. Wood Hill, Wonersh, is the meet for Mr. Henning's coverts; and Hurtwood, whence a fir forest runs right away to Ewhurst, is, though a rough place, a very valuable stronghold.

On the lower ground—where the numerous woods belong (with the exception of the property of the Sadler family, of Mr. J. Godman at Dunsfold, and

Lord Winterson round Shillinglee) to almost equally numerous owners—the principal meets are Chiddingfold, Baynards, Cranleigh, Hall Place, Dunsfold, and Van-Lane. Near Haslemere are some rough coverts; and Mr. Stewart-Hodson takes the best of care of his string of coverts reaching to Frillinghurst and Rodgate. The last-named place is the rendezvous for Botney Bay, a very deep clay woodland, in whose tangle of hazel and briar a fox is to be found with greater certainty than almost anywhere else in the Hunt.

LORD FITZHARDINGE'S.*

THE immense area over which the representatives of the Berkeley family had in the last century exercised the right of hunting, viz., from Bristol to the Marble Arch—has piece by piece been relinquished till the late Lord Fitzhardinge narrowed his scene of operations to a manageable four-days-a-week country—the pith of which is the very narrow vale down the eastern bank of the Severn, as it flows from Tewkesbury to Bristol. If this lengthy vale (nearly fifty miles) could but be brought into a compact area, Lord Fitzhardinge would possess in it one of the finest of all foxhunting countries — nearly all fine-scenting grass, level, temptingly fenced, and thoroughly preserved for the sport. The single drawback to the Berkeley Vale, as it now stands, is its slender width. Confined as it is between the Severn and the hills (continuations of the Cotswold) it has nowhere south of Gloucester a breadth of more than four or, at the outside, five miles. A good fox is off to the hills and woods like a shot; only a bad and shortrunning one remains in the vale. A straight one that will run up or down the

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Vide Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 14, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

vale is a rare exception. So it becomes a rule that the nearer the water a fox is found, the better the chance of a gallop — and, while that gallop lasts, nothing, even in the shires, can beat it for fun and incident. The fences—big and close together—are seldom strong enough to be forbidding. A fox with a good point before him, and his movements well hidden, is pretty sure to run straight; and, though a pack of hounds takes more time than a horse to overcome a tangled fence, it is only a good horseman with a practised eye and ready judgment who will pop in and out of these little enclosures as quickly as the hounds he follows. Immediately round Berkeley the meadows are particularly small, and jumping is consequently almost incessant; while the ditches—often very wide and deep—are blind and choked till the season is well advanced. From Berkeley northward, to Gloucester, Cheltenham, and Tewkesbury, is quite a flying country; and little but grass is to be seen, till near Tewkesbury the vale opens wider, the plough has been brought more into play, and the enclosures are of greater size. Several brooks also cross this part of the vale, which is held in high favour by the little hunting world of Cheltenham, whence the Berkeley field at all northern meets is chiefly recruited. It is, indeed, at this extremity of his country that Lord Fitzhardinge has his largest fields. Elsewhere they are of comfortably small proportions—the lack of crowd giving men, and consequently hounds, the best possible chance of getting quickly and pleasantly over the closely fenced vale. For this his lordship and followers have to thank the shape and

position of his country. Except in the far north he has no neighbours but the Duke of Beaufort. The latter hunts along the south and eastern border of the Berkeley; and, as his hounds take the field five days a week, the members of his Hunt have little leisure for going elsewhere. The broad Severn is an effectual barrier to protect most of the upper side of the country. In the Tewkesbury district just mentioned a famous gallop occurred two or three seasons ago—hounds running hard and unchecked from Tewkesbury Park till they killed their fox at the end of some fifty minutes. The chief leaders in this memorable run were Mr. H. Baker, Mr. R. Chapman of Cheltenham, and F. Archer, the jockey. From Frampton to the hills is, perhaps, as pretty a sample of the flying vale as can be instanced; and the Hardwicke neighbourhood is, again, remarkably good. Immediately south of Berkeley the ground is for a while a trifle more undulating; then comes the Oldbury district, which stands alone as being the only at all impracticable part of the vale. An oval about Oldbury, to include Shepherdine, discovers a style of fence that puts direct progress out of the question—the hedge being very broad, very high, and backed up by a ditch that alone should be sufficient to keep bullocks in a field. The land here being all rich pasture, and naturally fully exposed to the strong winds that sweep up the Severn, the hedges are encouraged to grow as luxuriantly as possible, with a view to providing in an effectual and economical form the shelter needed by the cattle. You may get about it after hounds, as in the too stoutly fenced districts of other parts of the world; but you

cannot ride anything like straight-to-hounds. Below this comes the lowest section of the marsh—again quite different from the rest. All along the Severn-bank you meet with occasional open drains. But here you see little or nothing else. About New Passage absolutely every field is fenced squarely in with four of these "rheens," and, without a horse that will face open water, it is useless your venturing into the district. At the same time, the rheens are seldom beyond a horse's fair powers; and if he is not afraid to jump he need scarcely ever be stopped or put down by them. Here and there a main-drain—cut altogether out of proportion to the others—may interpose an impassable difficulty; though this happens but rarely. To jump the rheens cleverly, and without taking too much out of himself, a horse had better be able to shorten his stride and measure his distance steadily—than be the headstrong rusher that we are apt to class as a water jumper elsewhere. For when the rheens are cleaned out—as is often necessary—the mud is thrown out on either bank, layer after layer, and grass spreads itself over all. Thus the banks are generally found to rise considerably above the surrounding level—calling for caution on the part of a horse in taking off, and giving him every chance of catching his toes on landing. This marsh or rheen-country continues down the river-side by Almondsbury to Bristol—below which there are no hounds for about thirty miles.

Of course the Berkeley Vale becomes deep and holding in mid-winter, like any other low country of stiff soil. But at the worst it rides no deeper than the Blackmoor Vale, the Vale of Aylesbury, the Old

Berkshire Vale, or part of the Vale of White Horse. It takes a strong horse, a well bred one, and a very good hunter to perform creditably over it. And if he is to take his turn on the hills as well, he must possess all the best attributes of a Cotswold horse in addition. The coverts of the vale are small but numerous—almost too numerous, when a *bad* fox is before hounds; for they not only encourage him to dodge, but they aid him to set other foxes on foot as he goes. Besides plantations and small woods, there are about the marsh many withy beds which form excellent covert. It almost goes without saying, that foxes are wonderfully plentiful all over Lord Fitzhardinge's country—or such a narrow strip as his vale could not stand the incessant work it gets after the first month of the regular season. Yet the worst stage it ever arrives at is that the fox of the day may sometimes be difficult to find, though no sooner are hounds set going than other foxes are sure to discover themselves.

Overlooking the Berkeley Vale for the whole of its length are—as above written—the Cotswold hills, the plateau of which, after providing the Duke of Beaufort with half his hunting ground, runs north to do duty for the Cotswold and the North Cotswold Hunts. Strong woodlands clothe the steep ascent, everywhere on the edge of Lord Fitzhardinge's country; and these well wooded hillsides form the chief scene of work during all the earlier and final weeks of the season. The foxes which are naturally inclined to gather in the big woods as autumn comes on are thus thoroughly routed; and many are driven down

to swell the supply of the smaller coverts in the vale. Occasionally from these hill woodlands a fox may travel away across the uplands; and by taking his field for a gallop over the Duke's stonewalls add still further to the varieties which a rider with The Berkeley will have to encounter. But a run in this direction is not nearly so frequent an occurrence as might be supposed, for in addition to the strength and roughness of the woods themselves there exists between the two countries for a considerable length a great gulf—with woods and hill on either side. So a fox found on the Berkeley brink of the ravine will most likely only cross over to the Badminton side, to return, when he finds hounds are still after him, without caring for further exploration. This secondary valley runs up northward by Wootton-under-Edge—Tiley, for instance, being neutral. The course of the hills as they overlook the Vale and the Severn, is approximately by Wootton-under-Edge, Coaley Wood, Woodchester, Standish, Painswick, St. Leonards, Leckhampton and so on above Cheltenham.

It would be supposed from the maps that a large tract of country across the Seven—as far as Monmouth, Ross, Mitchell Dean and Newnham, is still hunted by Lord Fitzhardinge. As a matter of fact, hounds are now scarcely ever taken over the water at all, though the new railway bridge just constructed near Sharpness Docks offers every facility for transport. The Forest of Dean, which occupies the heart of this area, was always a wild woodland tract, almost hopeless in its roughness. Now that collieries are in full swing in every corner, and railways competing thickly for the

wealth unearthed, foxhunting has little place; and the chase has virtually withdrawn.

The Kennels, with every advantage of good situation, good water, and the good shelter of the old elms overhanging wide grass yards, are within the precincts of Berkeley Castle. During the period in which the late Earl Fitzhardinge (uncle of the present Master) hunted the "Broadway country" of the Cotswold in addition to his home district, he had kennels also at Andover's Ford, whither he took his hounds for a month at a time. But the main kennels have been at Berkeley Castle, and the pack has been uninterruptedly and munificently maintained, since an Earl of Berkeley first hunted the fox. At the present moment there are about sixty-five couples of hounds in kennel, and their quality is too well known to need comment. It may be set down, however, that excellence in the chase is always held to be the first consideration in selection for breeding purposes. Other claims, especially blood, have their weight; and shape and make are not neglected. But, primarily, Lord Fitzhardinge's is a hunting pack—with great pace and plenty of music. The old blood in his kennel has done much to benefit other packs (take Mr. Coupland's, the present Quorn, for example); while for new infusions of recent years the chief sources appealed to have been the Badminton, Cotswold, Grove, and Belvoir.

Gloucester and Bristol would no doubt be found convenient towns whence to hunt with Lord Fitzhardinge—and the former offers the variety of a day apiece with the Ledbury and the Cotswold. But from either it would be necessary, in order to work out four

days a week with the Berkeley, to take train occasionally. Cheltenham (the properties of which as a hunting-quarter have already been touched upon under the head of the Cotswold country) commands all the northern meets of Lord Fitzhardinge; while Tetbury, in the Duke's country, is within riding distance of many of the Berkeley fixtures. The former places are each about three hour's journey from London (Paddington). Tetbury, being half a dozen miles from a railway station, takes a little longer to reach.

The usual days of hunting are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday; and when the season has fairly set in they are, as regards the Vale, generally distributed much as follows — Monday takes the southern or Almondsbury district, for such a meet as the Lamb-and-Flag, Henbury—whence they go to Blaize Castle or the Berwick Woods (a capital stronghold), or else to Kings Weston, just above the rheens. The Swan at Almondsbury is another common meet, generally for the marsh and its withy beds. Meeting at Stoke, they draw the small coverts of Stoke Park, and on probably to the North Woods and Mr. Bush's coverts; while from Alveston-Ship they have Hay Wood, a good-sized covert of Mr. Lippincott's.

Tuesday is for the other end of the country—the pleasant Tewkesbury and Gloucester district, where fair hedge-and-ditch fences, with few strong binders and less timber, help a horse to sail along as fast as hounds will take him. Tewkesbury Park, with small good coverts round, is one of the most northerly and notable meets. Then there is The Hare-and-Hounds on the Gloucester road, whence they may go either to

Chosen Hill or the nice covert of Hatherley Wood, and on to Norton Hill. Meeting at Norton, they will very likely take the same ground the reverse way. On the home side of Gloucester is Hardwicke Court (the residence of Mr. Baker, who is a strenuous supporter of the Hunt). Here they draw the Hardwicke gorse and coverts, or else go over the canal to other coverts of Mr. Baker's and those of Sir William Guise—excellent country surrounding this fixture. From Whitminster Inn, again, they may take Standish Park on the verge of the hill—the property of Lord Sherborne, but at present the residence of Mr. Potter, and in which neighbourhood Mr. Butcher also contributes largely to fox preserving. The same meet may also lead to Hardwick or Frampton. A new gorse, by the way, now exists near Standish Park, known as Quedgeley Gorse and belonging to Major Curtis-Heywood. Frampton Court itself is often fixed, and, in the absence of Mr. H. Clifford, is held temporarily by an equally good preserver, Mr Tidswell. The White Lion-Cambridge also generally means Frampton—hounds then drawing towards home, taking for instance Cat's Castle, a small privet and thorn covert.

Thursday and Saturday are both usually spent in the home district, of Berkeley, Thornbury, Rangeworthy, and neighbourhood. Indeed Saturday is more often than not fixed for The Kennels, whence they have his Lordship's many little coverts in the vicinity of the Castle, Tintock, Fishers, Bushy Grove, and Redwood—also Mr. Bengough's coverts. Or they may start off either in the Michael Wood or Hill's Wood direction. Hill Court is the usual meet for Hill's Wood, or

for Fishing-House Withy bed close to the Severn. Damery Mill is for Tortworth Park (Lord Ducie's), or else for St. Michael's Wood Chace—the largest covert in the vale, and full of foxes. Wick Bridge may also be for the last-named stronghold, or for the small coverts over the railway.

Among the chief hill-meets are Wortley, by Wotton-under-Edge, whence they may draw right on from Wortley Bushes to Ozleworth Park (Mr. Rolt's). From Kingscote Park (the residence of a widely known sportsman, Colonel Kingscote) they begin with his High Wood, and may work on to Woodchester Park, (Mr. Leigh's). Down House may be fixed with a view either to Coaley Wood or for the vale—to Ashmead and The Narles. Woodchester Park, with its various woods, will provide a day of itself; as also can Standish Park above mentioned.

HON. MARK ROLLE'S.*

The country which is now about changing hands, but which has been associated with the name of Hon. Mark Rolle ever since it embarked on a separate existence, is situated on the far west of the very sporting county of Devon. The late Rev. John Russell, of widely-loved memory, was brought up at Iddesleigh, within its borders; and during his Oxford vacations had a few couple of hounds with which to rouse the deep glens and woods round his home. This was fully sixty years ago; but for many years afterwards, whether from Iddesleigh or from his subsequent home at Swimbridge, he could wander with his hounds almost where he chose—over ground that has since been found ample for The Dulverton, The Stars of the West, The Earl of Portsmouth and Hon. Mark Rolle. In later times Mr. Furze kept hounds at Dolton; and with the purchase of these in 1858 Mr. Rolle laid part foundation of a pack that was eventually to develope into such well admitted excellence. At the same time he bought also the entire pack of hounds of Mr. Deacon of the H.H., and afterwards was able to obtain some from the Rufford and the Duke of Cleveland. As

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 19, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

years went on he had various drafts from Belvoir and Brocklesby; and bred as much as he could from those sources. Add to this, that Lord Portsmouth was ever ready to lend him all possible assistance; and it will readily be understood that when in 1876 Mr. Rolle was forced to the conclusion that his health would not admit of hunting four days a week, a dog pack far too good to merit dispersion was sold out of the country. With the lady pack remaining, he continued to hunt three days; but no longer went to the "Blagden Country," a fine scenting district which since then has in a great measure constituted the country of Mr. Calmady of Tetcot. From Barnstaple round the sea coast to the borders of Cornwall outlines Mr. Mark Rolle's country — with Lord Portsmouth along his inland boundary. In other words, the fish-hook course of the river Torridge—which rises near the coast at Hartland; and, after penetrating some fifteen or sixteen miles into Devonshire, returns to the sea between Westward Ho and the town of Barnstaple —practically delineates his scene of operation.

The beauties of Devonshire scenery depend, as we all know, in a great measure on the varied and broken nature of the country—on the closeness with which glen follows glen and hill succeeds hill, and on the multiplicity and richness of its woods. In many parts every valley is a deep dark coombe—to cross which it is necessary to dip into the shade of perhaps a mile of overhanging foliage, along paths made and used only by deer and cattle. But apart from the depths of the valleys, the steepness of the hills, and the density of the woods, there are other causes which tend to make

Devonshire a difficult arena for the foxhunter. The open ground (save and excepting, of course, the many heathery commons and the great open waste of Exmoor) is generally so closely fenced with enormous banks—straight cut, often stone-revetted, and usually thickly planted on top—that it is impossible for any horse to carry a man over them. Thus, "riding to hounds" is ninety-nine times out of a hundred confined to galloping from point to point along lanes or well-known bridlepaths—keeping as much as possible on the higher ground, and trusting mainly to a knowledge of country (with such aid as eyes and ears can gather from a distance) eventually to bring you once again on closer terms with the pack. What a chance such conditions must give to hounds hunting a fox on their own resources—especially on such grand scenting soil as Devonshire admittedly possesses —it is needless to point out. And in truth no county in England can show more genuine foxhunting, or can point to the work of its hounds more proudly than this wild western shire. The hounds of the country will sweep at a tremendous pace over the great banks —taking them widely abreast when the scent serves them. But it is curious to note the appalling effect produced on an imported hound, by his first experiences of these formidable earthworks. His first half dozen banks are pretty sure to roll him back as many times; and it is only the pressure of example, and the dislike of a high couraged foxhound to finding himself left behind, that help him to acquire the knack of jumping a Devonshire bank even as quickly as this.

Such, however, being the characteristics of Devon generally—as of Somerset partly—a pleasant exception is found in the western portion of Mr. Mark Rolle's country. Up the earlier vale of the Torridge and its confluent stream the Waldron—*i.e.*, the Putford and Bradworthy side of the Hunt territory—is a nice open and generally rideable country, more in keeping with Ireland than Devonshire. It is neither nearly as hilly as the rest of the country, nor are its banks so steep, high and hedge covered—most of them, indeed, being well within the scope of a clever horse's powers. The inclosures are rather larger than those of the east or Lord Portsmouth's country; and except here and there along the valleys, where meadows generally form the banks of the streams, they are almost entirely under the plough. Were it not for occasional bogs—which, however, seldom avail to entrap the natives—there are few impediments in this district that need stop a good man on a well taught Irish, or even Devonshire, horse. The farmers of the neighbourhood breed a great many small but well shaped horses, which from the earliest days of breaking they teach to scramble on to a bank and off again, and to follow their masters over when called. Capital sportsmen and keen foxhunters are the yeomen of Devonshire. In the "Bradworthy country" they nearly all follow the hounds; and what their horses cannot carry them over, they generally negotiate by jumping off, popping over with their horses after them, and remounting again in incredibly quick time. The coverts of this favoured side, too, are not nearly as large and frequent as those of the east, or

Torrington side—through which the same river Torridge runs, but amid hills and woods of a very pronounced type. "Brakes"—*i.e.*, natural gorses—from the staple coverts of the open country; and a fox found here will often travel long distances to reach either the coombes and cliffs of the coast or the strong woodlands inland. All Mr. Rolle's country is decidedly good scenting ground—unless, it should be added, the season happens to be a very wet and cold one. A few small patches of moor, or common, are scattered over his territory; but they are both scarce and small as compared with the share possessed by other Hunts adjoining. Plenty of foxes, also, there are throughout his country—few Hunts owning a greater number of zealous preservers.

Stanford's map goes to show various railways cutting across the country under notice; but it is satisfactory to note that many of these ominous, red-dotted lines are at least premature. For instance, there is no railway at present between Hatherley and Holsworthy, nor again between Hatherley and Torrington. The Torrington neighbourhood contains most of the big woods alluded to, such as Monkleigh Wood, Pencleave, Potheridge (where remains a fine old farmhouse, still pointed out as the birthplace of General Monk) with various others down the lower banks of the Torridge. All the country north and south of Torrington continues very hilly and thickly wooded; but towards Barnstaple it again improves, and is a little more rideable.

The pack has for twenty-four seasons been kept at Stevenstone, the residence of the master, and where he

built kennels on taking hounds. Now, however, the hounds have become the property of Sir William Williams, the new Master; and new kennels are in the course of erection near Torrington.

The days of hunting up to the present have been Monday, Friday, and either Wednesday or Thursday as might be the more convenient. Wednesday being market day at Holsworthy, the meets of that neighbourhood are generally fixed for the following day. Monday has been for the Bideford and Barnstaple end of the country and the home district; Friday for the south side; while the meet of the middle of the week, often involving distances of fifteen miles, or even more, to covert, has been reserved for the chosen east. Near Barnstaple is Tawstock Court (the seat of Sir Henry Wrey) with coverts round the estate. From the meet of Alverdiscot they draw Mr. W. A. Deane's celebrated coverts — notably the New Brake and Newton Wood. Bellevue or Stevenstone are for Mr. Rolle's coverts—Ward Brake, which consists of gorse and plantation, being especially a great place. One of these last meets is usually named for the first day of the season, and also for the day following the annual Hunt Ball. Roborough is for the big wood adjoining; and an equally favourite meet is Beaford Moor for Cudworthy Brake (Col. Arnold's)—a sure find, and the chance of nice open country, attending both occasions.

Among the Friday fixtures are Buckland Filleigh—the property of Mr. Browne, who has coverts of immense size—great woods and strong hills surrounding the house; Meeth, on the southern border of the country, is another very popular meet; and foxes are

always in readiness in the plantations of the brothers Madge. About Heanton are many very well preserved woodlands belonging to Lord Clinton, whose property hereabouts extends to Shebbear—Potheridge being about the junction point of his estate with that of his brother, the retiring Master. About Langtree are some nice brakes and woods; and at Winscot Mr. Moore-Stevens preserves foxes most keenly in his various coverts.

The Wednesday or Thursday country has among its chief meets Woolfardisworthy, whence are various brakes to be drawn—Jacob's Moor (a gorse on a patch of moorland) being usually the first. On one occasion, after meeting here, they ran from Marshall Brake (two miles beyond Woolfardisworthy), a ten mile point, to ground in the wood close to Torrington. Seckington-Cross, Hartland, is their most distant fixture, in the rough promontory of the far north-west. Foxes, however, found near here will generally run inland rather than to the cliffs—unless it be to the deep woods of Clovelly. Seckington Brake and The Plantation are both capital little places, and are the property of Mr. Fane. At Gorvin, too, are a couple of excellent brakes belonging to Sir George Stucley. Bradworthy is, perhaps, the best meet in the country; and there are several right good brakes in its vicinity. Chief among these are Dinneworthy Brake, Little Beer, and Ashmansworthy Brake. Woodford Bridge has Bickington Brake (Mr. Rolle's); and Thornbury some well-foxed woods on the Torridge, *e.g.*, Bradford Wood, &c.; while near the meet of Dunsland are useful plantations of Mr. Barratt's.

SOUTH-AND-WEST WILTS.*

The combinate title of the country under notice is due to the amalgamation of two Hunts under the present Master. Colonel Everett commenced work in 1869 by forming a *West* Wilts country from such territory as the South Wilts could spare him—little more than Heytesbury, Warminster Down, Southleigh and vicinity—to add to what he could have to the westward on sufferance from the Duke of Beaufort and the Blackmoor Vale. In 1871, Mr. Codrington (who had held the South Wilts for two years, in succession to Capt. Jarrett and Mr. Thomas Pain) resigned. Colonel Everett then united the mother country with its branch; and has ever since been Master of the South-and-West Wilts. About two years ago the Duke of Beaufort reclaimed the nice strip of grassy vale that he had lent his neighbours, in the north of their country from Westbury upwards; and the South-and-West Wilts were accordingly driven in on that side upon the downs of Salisbury Plain. To the west they might still hunt far over vale and farther still over a varied pleasant country—if only the dwellers in that

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 20 and 21, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

strangely un-English land had been born to any sense of the blessings of foxhunting. It seems scarcely credible in this year of grace 1883, when the increase of population and the inroads of building are pressing hard upon the space of half the hunting countries of England, and have even crushed some altogether out of being—that a full moiety of the county of Somerset (much of it, too, extremely good riding ground and with fully sufficient coverts) should know nothing of foxhunting. Yes—"and pity 'tis 'tis true"—from Bristol to Bridgewater; from Bath (and almost from Frome, which is nearly the farthest point westward that the S. and W. Wilts reach) to the very seashore (a space of some 30 miles square being thus included) —not a foxhound is ever seen, for the simple reason that there is not a fox for him; nor does it appear to occur to the people that the joint presence of such actor and agent would be in any degree agreeable or beneficial to them. This is by no means in keeping with the spirit of western Somerset—where the chase, whether of fox or stag, is upheld by men of every degree with a reverence second only to that paid to orthodoxy of religion. The man of Dunster or the Quantocks might well cast at his compatriot of the diocese of Bath and Wells the poet's query:

> Lives there a man with soul so dead,
> Who never to himself has said,
> This is my own, my native land?

and leave the obvious inference to point itself. But this bane does not extend over the edge of the county, as hunted by the S. and W. Wilts round and about Wanstrow, nor does it apply to the adjoining part

hunted by the Blackmoor Vale. Still, the fact remains that an area of good hunting country, sufficient for two packs and in close proximity to many old-established Hunts, is content to remain altogether without hounds; and, what is more to the point, the S. and W. Wilts, as regards its present dearth of vale, is left much in the position of the thirsty mariner, "with water, water, all around, but ne'er a drop to drink." This is but an outsider's view—possibly, it may be suggested, only a valesman's—and may very likely fail to represent the concensus of opinion on the spot. But most hunting men will, I think, concede that hills—whether those of High Leicestershire, of Yorkshire, Scotland, Hampshire, or elsewhere—may, as a rule, be placed some points behind their adjacent lowlands, in a comparative estimate of merit for the all-important purpose in view. In other words that in nine times out of ten, the vale gives better hunting and more pleasurable riding.

The S. and W. Wilts country has, however, at least one corner of admirable vale—as well turfed, and carrying as honest a scent, as any of the "Vale of Blackmore" (the title by which the maps denominate the valley of the river Stour, and its tributaries). This is from Mere and West Knoyle southward, to include East Knoyle, Sedgehill, and Semley; where not only is there sound and excellent going, but, when once clear of W. Knoyle, banks and fences less fiercely formidable than in the stiffest parts of the Blackmoor Vale territory. Much of the famous Vale holds the wet so closely in a rainy winter, that only the very best of horses can gallop the rush-covered and deeply-

gripped meadows, even though bank-and-ditch fences call for less exhausting effort than strong stake-and-bounds, that have to be covered at a fly.

Adjoining this little section of vale, there runs near the southern margin of the S. and W. Wilts a narrow and low, but broken and strongly wooded, strip almost to Salisbury. Before entering this—about Wincombe and Donhead—the country is absolutely hilly, stoutly inclosed and distinct from down, and is backed up by the great ornamental woods of Fonthill Abbey, where our revered preceptor Beckford lived, hunted, and planted. From anywhere here a fox may run down into the vale, whether of the S. and W. Wilts, the East Dorset, or the Blackmoor Vale—the three countries touching each other close to Gillingham, and about five miles from the town of Shaftesbury. But from Wardour Castle up to about Barford, is a complete chain of woods, underlying the high gorse-sprinkled ridge which marks the southern border between the S. and W. Wilts and the East Dorset.

With another great chain of woods in the Witham district to west, and the two enormous coverts of the Groveley and Great Ridge on the uplands, it is patent enough that the South-and-West Wilts has at least its share of coverts. Yet quite a third of its present area is without a covert of any sort! All the rest of it—not hitherto alluded to, is open down, of the Tedworth and Hampshire kind — lofty, undulating, unfenced, mostly ploughed, and totally unplanted. Roots and corn are sown on it, and a short turf clothes such slopes as are still left for sheepwalk. Foxes lie in the corn in summer, among the turnips till Christ-

mas, in the fallows—or where they can find a sheltered corner—afterwards. And in each and every case they are nursed and tended by a sport-loving race of farmers.

The downs—(Once they were truly downs, in the acceptation that then conveyed a picture of soft herbage, a green springy surface—and "heads up and sterns down." But all that was upset when the price of wheat suddenly made the ploughshare a magician's wand, pointing to gold below the surface)—the downs, still bearing the unmerited title though now more deserving of that of wolds, take up a full half of the present S. and W. Wilts country. From Salisbury as an apex (whither the various dividing streams and valleys converge) they spread in fan shape to the north and west—Salisbury Plain alone occupying nearly half the fan, the Great Ridge forming another feather (some fifteen miles in length, and gradually spreading from three to eight in breadth), and below this a third but narrowest, range running due west along the border. Salisbury Plain has (beyond a little place at Chittern belonging to Mr. W. Long) not a covert upon it. From Tilshead to the Wiley Valley —a distance of fully half a dozen miles—it is entirely dependent on what the farmers can do ; and foxes are always to be found, until frost has withered the turnips. Till December, or sometimes later, they are put up by the field spreading themselves, and riding in line across the open. A fox thus found starts at the worst advantage with hounds, for a scramble over the open downs; and, if the scent be fairly good, they never leave him. Rousing him in this way from his kennel,

it is difficult to give him sufficient time to get on his legs before hounds are upon him; for, as we have all seen, they will often pull down a fresh found fox in a field of turnips or rough plough, in the first hundred yards. And in this way many a fox falls a victim on the downs.

Thus it will have been gathered that the three main component parts of the South and West Wilts country are (taking them in inverse order and degree) down, woodland, and vale. The down preponderates, and stands any amount of work to at least Dec. 1st. The woodland is always a stand-by; and allows of hunting being carried on late into April. For instance, the two immense coverts of Great Ridge and Groveley are especially useful for spring hunting—the former belonging to Mr. Morrison, and the latter, which extends as a continuous wood for four or five miles, part to Lord Pembroke and part to Mr. Wyndham of Dinton whose father and uncle kept the South Wilts hounds for years. The vale comes in as the down goes out—the frost that destroys the turnip leaf making the fences of the low ground more visible and feasible. In the same way the woods improve as the downs lose their virtue—the fallen leaves perishing under the cold and wet.

For such distinct varieties of country a horse would have to possess exceptional and manifold merit, were he expected to shine to like advantage in all. The downs call for speed and blood; the woods for endurance; and the vale for boldness and jumping power. So it is generally found advisable to effect a compromise by riding a light well-bred horse on the

hills, and keeping a sturdy clever hunter for the vale. For a down fox seldom takes the vale; while a fox found in the vale or in the deep woods of the west has plenty of scope in his native sphere.

The most westerly woods regularly drawn are, perhaps, those known as the Black-Dog Woods at Standerwick; though occasionally hounds are taken as far as Orchardleigh, and about once a season to Mells. But, lower down, about Wanstrow, they hunt regularly; and Batcombe Wood is one of their deepest coverts. Eight hundred acres is no uncommon size for a woodland on this side; and, after leaving Barrow Wood, Upton Wood, &c., one finds about Witham a great chain of such coverts, stretching northward almost to Warminster, and southward to the Stourton Woods in the Blackmoor Vale country. Among these are the West End Woods, Witham Park (a wood some three miles in length), Bradley Woods (the property of the Duke of Somerset), and the Marquis of Bath's great coverts at Longleat. Just within this semicircle of woodland is a district best known as the Maiden-Bradley country, wherein is Hicks Park Wood, an admirable covert, well situated and owning a stout race of foxes. When drawing this, the chief aim is, not unnaturally, to prevent foxes from making for the big woodlands so near at hand. All this, the Frome side of the country, is hunted on a Tuesday (or it may be, a Wednesday or Thursday, according to where the Duke may be meeting)—the usual places of meeting being Black-Dog Wood, Wanstrow, Witham, Yarnfield (on the edge of the Blackmoor Vale), Maiden Bradley, Bishopstrow, and Southleigh (the

wood near the Kennels at Greenhill, two miles from Warminster). Monday, when the season has fairly set in, is given to the south of the country for the Fovant district (where the railway and the river Nadder run together down to Salisbury) or for the cherished "Knoyle Vale." In the former case hounds can be thrown at once into the Wardour Castle woodlands, or, if wind and weather seem propitious, to the gorses on the hill top adjoining. The ordinary meets are Wardour Castle, Sutton Mandeville, Dinton, Fovant-Hut and Racecourse, Fonthill and Wyncombe Park; while the best fixtures of the vale are East and West Knoyle, Sedgehill, and Semley Station, with some nice little woods under the Knoyles.

The best run on record during the present Master's administration took place after a meet at Semley some few seasons ago. Finding at Beckles Cliff, they ran nearly to Cranborne Chace, back into the home country by Alvediston, up the valley towards Wilton, and killed at Tisbury, after a run of two hours and forty-five minutes—in which hounds are computed to have run fully seventeen miles.

Friday, the remaining hunting-day, is looked upon as belonging to Salisbury Plain and the downs; though the Wiley valley is very frequently the scene of the meet, and there is a nice wood at Heytesbury, besides some withybeds by the riverside. Thus Heytesbury, Codford, and Fisherton are common fixtures; while on the downs are Maddington, Shrewton, Elston Farm, and Chittern Ban. Great Ridge and Groveley, on the opposite downs, are more

often taken on a byeday; and as already mentioned, come strongly into play towards the end of the season.

For these three days a week Colonel Everett keeps a very strong pack in kennel—often beginning the season with about fifty couple. An active, not oversized hound is aimed at; and both dogs and bitches can go a great pace, besides being a good-looking, even pack, and having a reputation for smart and steady work. Like almost all western packs, they get much of their blood from the kennels of the Duke of Beaufort and Lord Portsmouth, aided also by Lord Portman, the Blackmoor Vale, the Tedworth, &c. Salisbury Plain forms a splendid schooling ground in the autumn; for there hounds learn their work in the midst of multiplied riot—hares often getting up round them by the dozen. The fact of their having to find foxes in the open—their game frequently jumping up in their very midst—is of itself very exciting to young hounds; and the sober drudgery of the woodlands must be a wholesome and useful antidote.

The South and West Wilts field is seldom, if ever, a large one. The vale meets are always well attended, as they bring men over the borders from the Blackmoor Vale and Lord Portman's; and Sherborne in the former country is a strong hunting centre. Warminster would be the readiest point whence to hunt entirely with the South-and-West Wilts. Salisbury too (about two hours and a half from London—Waterloo Station) commands this country besides that of the Tedworth and Lord Radnor.

LORD PORTMAN'S.*

Lord Portman's (the East Dorset) country is part of the extraordinary extent of gound hunted until the year 1858 by the late Mr. J. J. Farquharson. If only as a curiosity of fox-hunting history, it is worth putting on record that the territory held and hunted for many years solely by that gentleman, included the whole of the present countries of Lord Portman, Mr. Radclyffe (the South Dorset), and the Cattistock, besides parts of the present Blackmoor Vale, Lord Radnor's, and South-and-West Wilts. The huntsman who worked this immense country for him was John Treadwell, father of the Old Berkshire huntsman—once so celebrated with the Quorn.

On Mr. Farquharson's retirement, Lord Portman established his present pack at his seat at Bryanston, close to the little town of Blandford, to hunt a district of which Blandford, Stourminster, Shaftesbury, and Cranborne are outline points. In this area are included a large strip of the Stour Vale or Vale of Blackmore, a considerable extent of lofty down, many strong woods besides the forest-like expanse of Cran-

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 21 and 22, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

borne Chace, and, lastly, a rough but sporting district on the verge of the New Forest. The Vale occupies the west of the country; and the best of it—from Shillington to Gillingham—runs up between Sturminster and Shaftesbury, to dovetail in with the South-and-West Wilts and the Blackmoor Vale. It thus forms a close and valuable addition—almost an integral part—of the pleasant hunting grounds for which Sherborne—the Melton of the west—is the chief resort and base. Sherborne and its immediate surroundings have already been dealt with in these sketches, under the head of the Blackmoor Vale. But its vicinity bears so directly upon any description of Lord Portman's country, that it is impossible to avoid allusion here. The largest and the hardest riding field that comes out with Lord Portman (it would be hard to find one to surpass it anywhere in the latter respect) is when his hounds are in the vale, within reach of Sherborne. Nor is it difficult to appreciate the causes that tend to the popularity enjoyed by Sherborne. Not only is it within easy reach of anywhere west of London; but, while offering unusually good country and ample hunting, it does not call for anything like the exaggerated stud that is held necessary for a campaign at certain quarters in the Midlands. At Sherborne, I am led to believe, a man starting with half a dozen sound and well-conditioned horses (or, if he have luck, with even one or two less) may see all the sport, and see it as well as his fellows. The luxury of a second horse is very much the exception; and is, indeed, held to be almost superfluous. The distances to covert are not great,

for of the five days a week that are invariably offered him, there is not likely to be more than one—if any—beyond a radius of twelve miles. He will get four days a week with the Blackmoor Vale, and one with Lord Portman or The Cattistock—to be varied, or added to, by an occasional trip to the South-and-West Wilts. These are nearly altogether upon grass; and much of his time will be spent in the air. (No wonder that the soldier sportsman of Aldershot—in hot youth or accomplished maturity—is apt to look upon Sherborne as his haven of refuge, and, when time and funds admit, to flee thither from his drudgery and the sandy wastes around!) The grass is deep; but the inclosures are generally small, and a galloping horse has scarcely time to extend himself between his fences. Thus a stout horse that is a bold strong fencer and easy to turn is a better conveyance than a raking steeplechaser. Young blood may perhaps often prefer to be flying its fences rather than going on and off them (and the banks of the Dorsetshire vale are usually much too wide even to be merely "topped," *i.e.*, kicked back upon). But for a man who has learned to like bank-jumping, and plenty of it, no more pleasant arena can be found than is offered him in the neighbourhood of Sherborne.

A goodly number of most sporting farmers come out with the East Dorset Hounds. Their horses are probably bought when quite young from Irish droves; are soon taught to jump; and can then hold their own pretty easily, in a closely inclosed country where speed and breeding are not the first essentials. On a fine scenting day—no uncommon indulgence where moist

old turf is *every* day the main foundation—hounds can go over the vale faster than horses. For the lesser animal is not only quicker over its fences, but gets into its stride sooner, laying itself down to gallop at once—and particularly is this to be noticed where the land has been given up altogether to dairy farming, the staple industry of the vale.

In the centre of the best of the East Dorset vale stands Doncliffe, a well-wooded hill belonging to Mr. Morrison of Fonthill. A strong good wood, it occupies an isolated position not unlike that of Great Wood in the Duke of Beaufort's country, and is productive of much capital sport. The other coverts of the vale are all small; and when these have once been rattled, their foxes naturally congregate at Doncliffe—to be found again there and go off at score into the open, without hanging a moment.

In the lower, or Woolland, vale the fences are blinder, the inclosures smaller, and the country generally more cramped, than is the case north to Shillingston.

Between Woolland and Blandford, and to the high road between the latter place and Milborne (virtually the boundary line between the East and the South Dorset) is almost all rough hilly woodland, though set down on the map under the deceptive title of the Dorsetshire North Downs. The high land rises abruptly in true down fashion; though there is but little open ground—and that little is mostly ploughed—on the summit. Houghton Wood (some eight hundred acres) and Milton Park (about a thousand) are two of the largest woods; and are both owned partly by Mr.

Pleydell and partly by Mr. Hambro'. In the immediate neighbourhood of Bryanston, too, are several considerable coverts; in which hounds can work the cubs almost at the kennel door.

North of Blandford, and again on high ground, you soon enter upon the forest glades and hazel copses of Cranborne Chace—a tract of some seven or eight miles of the Robin-Hood-and-merry-green-wood class, through which the modern fox hound drives lustily, particularly if the weather be wet and fairly warm. Cranborne Chace holds game and riot of every description, even to roedeer: but foxes seldom fail, and hounds and roedeer soon get to treat each other with familiar contempt.

East of this picturesque district are Lord Alington's large coverts at Crichel; and beyond these again you come into the "Horton country"—a rough but very sporting outskirt of the New Forest. It extends from Wimborne to Cranborne; has a good deal of heath scattered about it; and is excellent working-ground for hounds. It is in most parts strongly fenced with banks and single ditches—the banks often rotten and treacherous. It holds, however, a good scent whenever the weather is favourable; and its foxes, if not too plentiful, have the merit of being strong and wild. Long and good runs are, consequently, generally associated with the Horton district. The coverts, of varying size—from plantation to wood—are quite sufficient for all requirements; and, besides these, there is the heather, in which foxes frequently lie up. For instance, Uddens Bog—on the heath outside the Uddens domain—almost always holds a fox. The

New Forest Hunt until recent years included in their country much of this district, up to Cranborne.

Between Cranborne and Handley is some nice open and undulating down—with much of the old short turf still left. And many good gallops come off here. The down extends also as far as Tarrant Keynston, within two or three miles of the Kennels. Harley is looked upon as the best down covert; and is a constant source of sport. It consists of a good gorse, well protected on two sides by a strip of sheltering plantation.

Lord Portman's usual hunting days are Monday, Wednesday or Friday. Monday is as a rule a hill day. The other two are liable to change in any direction, so as best to fit in with the convenience of neighbouring Hunts and the requirements of the home country. The hounds are not only fashionably bred; but are extremely active and very taking in appearance. Lord Portman originally began with a lower standard of height than that generally accepted; as in taking the young draft from good kennels he got many clever hounds rather below the fashionable height. It is certain that a moderate-sized and compact hound, and one not too heavy, is most suitable to so varied a country. It often happens that hounds after working half the day in the vale have to finish with an afternoon on the hills; and thus have two most opposite kinds of ground to travel over. The Grove, Brocklesby, Belvoir, and Wynnstay Kennels, as well as those of Lord Poltimore and Lord Portsmouth, have all helped to make the pack; and more recently the Oakley and the Fitzwilliam have rendered some service.

Among the leading meets in the several sections of the country, the following are some of the most important. At the top of the vale is Park Farm (close to Gillingham), with several small coverts about, most of which belong to Lady Westminster. East Stour, nearer Shaftesbury, is for the same class of country and coverts; Doncliffe is for the hill and wood above described; The Plough Inn, Marston, is for other small coverts in its neighbourhood; and Fontmel for those of Sir Richard Glynn. At the Woolland end of the vale is the meet of Woolland itself, for its coverts and those of Kitford and Whitmoor. Or the same fixture may be given with a view to the adjacent hills. Fiddleford is advertised for Piddle Wood and adjoining coverts; Stourminster for the same or similar district; and Shillingston Station for a number of coverts rented by Mr. Connop and specially well cared for in the interests of fox hunting.

The chief hill meets, on the rough stony upland of the south (where the woods are big and strong; and where, again, roedeer are found in plenty), are Turnworth, Milton Abbey, Whitchurch, The Down House, and The Kennels.

For Cranborne Chace (which, by the way, is the property of various owners—prominently General Pitt-Rivers, Mr. Farquharson, Colonel Howard and Lord Pembroke) the usual meets are Stourpaine Bushes, Fontmel Wood, Ashmore, Eastbury (Mr. H. R. Farquharson's), Rushmore, and Chace Farm.

On the East, or Horton side, are Uddens, Horton Inn, St. Giles, Gaunts, and High Hall with its decoy—a very favourite spot for foxes.

Lord Portman's country is, on the whole, well stocked with foxes—the supply being very constant, taking the country through. And this although game preserving is also largely carried on. Many coverts again are occupied by the farmers, who are all very staunch and friendly.

In conclusion, Blandford (about four hours from London, L. & S. W. Ry.) is the most central quarter for hunting with Lord Portman's hounds. Though a small town, it can offer good and ample accommodation; and it also commands the South Dorset.

THE CLEVELAND.*

Occupying the topmost corner of sporting Yorkshire, the Cleveland country commences on the wild North York Moors, and reaches northward to the sea and the Tees—the little town of Redcar, and close to it the Kennels, marking the point at which that river merges into the German Ocean. Until about the year 1870, the Cleveland Hounds, like their neighbours the Eskdale and the Sinnington, had no permanent kennels; but were entirely trencher-fed. At one period indeed of their history (previous to the year 1817) they held a still humbler position—being hunted and whipped-in to by men on foot, and running fox and hare on alternate days. Needless to say, the material which then composed the pack was in keeping with the crude and somewhat haphazard state in which it was maintained.

Up to that time the hounds were known as the Roxby; but in June of that year, at a meeting held at Loftus, the title of "The Roxby and Cleveland" was originated; and the Hunt inaugurated under the presidency of Mr. John Andrew. By the rules of the

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 5, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

Hunt, as then framed, an annual subscription of 1*l.* 11*s.* 6*d.* constituted a claim to membership; and it was agreed that the members should dine together at the beginning and end of each season—every member not attending on either of these occasions to forfeit five shillings, of which half a crown was to go towards the dinner-bill, half a crown towards the general fund of the Hunt. It was further enacted that "at each dinner the President shall call for the bill two hours after the cloth is drawn"—an explanation for such arbitrary legislation being possibly contained in the fact that those were the days of old port. The first dinner under these rules of conviviality and sobriety is accordingly recorded as having taken place at the Red Lion Inn on the 16th Oct. 1817.

Mr. J. Andrew continued as President of the Hunt till his death in 1835; when his son John reigned in his stead. He too died, 1855, and was in his turn succeeded by his son Thomas. The last named gentleman also surrendered the reins of office only at his death, A.D. 1870. During this lengthy period of hereditary mastership, the hounds were kept, in a very primitive and economical fashion, by the united efforts of the members of the Hunt. Some good strains of blood, however, had long been preserved in the pack; and on the accession of Squire Wharton of Skelton Castle, it was decided to do justice to the hounds by bringing them under orthodox kennel management. Mr. Newcomen had the pack for a time at his place at Kirkleatham; but eventually the present site was fixed for the kennels. Mr. Newcomen had the mastership for five years, and Mr. Proud, the

present master, has now held office for four. So much for the antecedents of the Hunt. The pack itself has steadily improved since its status has become established—the friendly assistance of Lord Zetland (who has done so much in the way of bringing the best blood of the Midlands to blend with the northern strains) having been especially valuable in maintaining an excellent working pack at Redcar.

The great rolling hills of north-eastern Yorkshire dip to sea level, at some points only on reaching the coast line, at others a few miles short of it—sometimes abruptly, sometimes by easy gradient. And it is at the foot and on the slopes of these hills that the Cleveland country lies. The strip of level plain between hill and shore, on the north, is sadly narrowed by the busy presence of the smelting furnaces, which cease neither day nor night from turning the ironstone of the adjacent hillsides into metal and money. Only a comparatively few years ago foxes could be hunted in the immediate precincts of Middlesboro'. Now, a broad chain of furnaces, and an almost continuous town of workmen, cover the riverside from Stockton to Redcar; wagonways run into the heart of the country; and steam is to be seen issuing from mining works at intervals along the whole line of hills adjacent. Yet even now room is found for a frequent scurry across the flat to the woods and higher ground of Wilton, Kirkleatham, and Upleatham; and the utmost is made of this pretty but limited area, by means of artificial gorses and earths to attract foxes from the hills. The whins of Lazenby, West Coatham, Megget Lane,

Mrs. Berryson, and Adamson, are instances of a system that owes much to Mr. Newcomen's mastership. Nice flying fences and a good deal of grass mark this level strip; and, if we except the various "stells" (*Anglice,* brooks) which flow deep and muddily across it, there is little or nothing to stop a fair hunter. Stiff clay is the ground work—as it is also on the west; where another slice of vale is found, along the border of the Hurworth, by Marton down to and beyond Stokesly. Here, too, the coverts are small—being chiefly plantations and whins; *e.g.,* the Blackmoor and Marton plantations and the whins of Seamer and Rye Hill. Great woods, on the other hand, are found clothing the sides of many of the Cleveland hills, and the banks of the various "gills"—another colloquialism, which may be translated as dales, becks, gullies, coombes, ravines, &c., according to the nativity or education of the reader. *Wide wooded watercourses* will perhaps answer for a general rendering of the term. A range of woods faces the kennels that alone might overawe the soul of a huntsman from a country of small coverts. But they are well-rided as they are well-and-stoutly-foxed. Most fortunately for the Hunt, they are the property of gentlemen who take the strongest interest in its prosperity. Thus the Kirkleatham Woods belong to Mr. Newcomen, the Wilton Woods to Sir C. Lowther, and those of Upleatham to Lord Zetland—and it is scarcely exaggeration to assert that they might be drawn every day of a week without failing to hold a fox. Their staunch virtue is the more valuable as they practically form the heart of the Cleveland

territory. Behind this front line of strongly wooded hill—and, indeed, breaking also through its midst—is gently sloping upland to form the base of the rougher heights surrounding. The little town of Guisborough lies behind this frontier hill (with its heather clad summit of Barnaby Moor); and tolerably light, and quite rideable ground—chiefly arable—reaches Guisborough from two sides. So a fox from Wilton or Kirkleatham, when he is forced to leave—as can generally be managed, unless he goes to ground—can find plenty of room to travel before reaching the rough background of highland. The neighbourhood of Stangnow and Moorsome brings us up to the moors; but nearer the sea on the east are found both broken ground and more strong woods. Every gill is thickly fringed with trees and thicket. Sometimes they are difficult to draw, and often they are difficult, or even impossible, to cross on horseback. Indeed, a horse for the Cleveland, besides possessing a more than rudimentary knowledge of how to cross a plain hedge-and-ditch country (as both the vale and the tilled upland may be termed), should have a certain turn for mountaineering, or at least should have the full use of his limbs and senses, to enable him to creep through and climb over the gills and other kindred difficulties.

Saltburn Gill and the Kilton Woods (both the property of Mr. Wharton) are the first strong coverts we come to on the east, followed by Grenkell and the Roxby Woods (of great size and length). At Hutton is a very large extent of young woodland, recently planted by Sir Joseph Pease. But at every point

where the water has cut its way from the upper ground, we find the sides of the burns widely clad with covert from moor to sea.

The ironstone mines on the hillside, besides the intrusion of their presence, provide another inconvenience in the opportunity they offer to foxes for getting to ground. Clefts, holes, and cavities exist in such profusion that any attempt at earth stopping would be a farce—and so disappointment is often only the result of a hard run. Among the qualities most needed for a hound in this country is, besides nose and tongue, that of drawing covert carefully and perseveringly; for foxes will hide up very closely under the banks and rocks, and often decline to move until bundled out of their kennel. The supply of foxes is, generally speaking, an ample one; and, while the scent on the cultivated ground is often good, it seldom fails to be strong on the heather.

Nor is fox preserving by any means confined to large covert-owners or landowners. The tenant farmers are still as friendly to the sport as they were in the days when the Cleveland was entirely a farmer's pack; and the small field (seldom more than twenty-five or thirty in number) is almost entirely composed of them and the resident gentlemen. The neighbouring towns, wealth-producing, dusty, and grimy as they are, scarcely constitute pleasant residences for those whose income they provide; and so they send but few representatives into the hunting field. The Redcar Kennels, by the way, though by no means palatial either as to situation or architecture (being some adapted buildings bound closely in between railways

and iron works) enjoy a notable immunity from most kennel ailments. It has more than once happened that a hound suffering from kennel lameness, and sent thither, has entirely recovered. The immediate vicinity of the sea, and still more the opportunity of exercising throughout the year on the broad sands, may have no little to do with this advantage.

Monday and Thursday are the days of hunting—arranged at discretion as regards place of meeting. The earliest cubhunting commences on the upper moorland; but as soon as the corn is cut, the hill-woodlands are well worked, and foxes driven as much as possible to the lower ground. The ordinary meets for the flat opposite the Kennels are Kirkleatham (more often than for the woods above), Marske, Coatham, &c. Among those for the western flat are Ormesby, Stokesley, and Seamer; with a prospect of a run over nice lowland, possibly into the Hurworth territory to Hilton Woods or the Leven banks (where a fox will generally get to ground). On the hills are Kildale, for its woods and the moor; while the farthest fixtures towards the wilds of grouse shooting are Castleton and Danby. To the east are Liverton and Kilton for the deep woods and gills; Loftus whence they may draw the cliffs; and Inderwell for Roxby Woods and Grinkell. From Guisborough they have Guisborough Banks; and for the re-entering hollow between Kirkleatham and Upleatham is Yearby Bank. Skelton Warren, again, gives them some four or five hundred acres of rough covert.

THE NORTH DURHAM.*

Whether you glance at the labyrinth of red streaks which on Stanford's map denote (and it would almost seem, protest against) the evil course of railroads, or breathe awhile the smoke and dust from the coalmines that surround the old cathedral town, the difficulties of making Durham a hunting centre are only too readily suggested. In the days of Ralph Lambton and his celebrated pack the Durham Hunt no doubt deserved its celebrity. To it belonged the whole of both the present North and South Durham countries; and the way was then incomparably more clear for fox and hound. The grassy hills of the north-west were open as now; and the centre of the county was not cut up and marred by the blustering interference of steam. Yet an excellent pack of hounds is still to be found within a mile or so of Durham: in spite of railways and collieries, the fox is still regularly found and hunted in the home district; while the more open country at a distance is still replete with as sterling sport as ever. That much of the North Durham

**Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheets 2 and 5, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

country is hunted under great difficulties goes without saying; but that the result is a success is all to the credit of the good and determined sportsman who brings it about. If ever a proverb were instanced it is here, in the contempt begotten of familiarity with the collieries and their iron-roads. The latter are mostly mere "wagon ways," it is urged; and "you soon get accustomed to them." Woods, well stocked with foxes, run just below the kennels, almost up to the town of Durham and right among a network of coalworks and trams—and here hounds are taken to amuse themselves whenever a day can be added or spared. Most often a fox found here will but dodge from wood to wood, and round the works and buildings, till his death. But now and again an old wanderer from the west country has made his way hither in a spirit of inquisitiveness or frolic. Then, shaking the dust off his feet, and the grit off his brush, he clears himself at once from the uncongenial surroundings, and leads them a straight merry dance to his native wilds. The mere wagon ways, it is true, present no very serious obstacle. They can be crossed almost anywhere; and the lives of hounds are not endangered as they would be amid swiftrunning trains. Once clear of this unhallowed circle, a fine wild highland district of grass and woodland will soon present itself—the woods extensive, but easy for hounds to drive and horses to gallop through, and the intervals filled in with large grass inclosures of from twenty to fifty acres. Stone walls divide field from field, as in the best of the Tynedale country—to which this side of the North Durham is not altogether dissimilar.

The walls are often too big to be easily jumped—added to which they occur most freely on the highest and steepest ground. But, being built entirely of loose stones, it is always easy to send the upper layers rolling by a push of the shoulder. A place thus made is likely to remain untouched till the shepherds go the round of their walls and fences in the spring; and, as the foxes of the district are apt to travel similar lines on repeated occasions, the gaps will continue to play their part throughout the season. As above mentioned, the grass and walls are only found quite to the west—where the ground rises rapidly towards the moorland. They commence in earnest about Cornsay; though quite a good country is entered upon before reaching that point—the ground southward to Crook and Brancepeth for example. It undulates strongly in every direction; but the hill sides are very rideable, and—in a wet winter especially—carry a capital scent, while the foxes are remarkably straight and stout. It is mostly arable, but with grass sprinkled here and there; and the fences are chiefly light thorn and timber as in Northumberland. Hilltop to Colepike or Broomshields (Mr. John Greenwell's) will represent about the best of the west—and Cornsay is an especially favourite meet, never failing to bring many men from a long distance. Between Cornsay and Hilltop and near Lanchester is The Ford (the property of another good fox preserver, Mr. Matthew Kearney). Westward of Cornsay, too, the country soon assumes a more wooded character — as, for instance, at Elm Park and Harpley Park, where the Rev. G. P. Wilkinson takes care that foxes should

always recognise a welcome. The Woodlands is the title of the extensive and well-timbered domain purchased a few years ago by Mr. Van Haunsbergen, who does not fail to pay full regard to the interests of the chase on his new property. None of these woods are dense enough to make foxes hang long before hounds; and a scent in covert, or out, is seldom wanting. Over the stone walls from field to field hounds will skim rapidly—topping the walls in a line, and generally making their way very much faster than horses can follow. A horse that can climb a hill, do a good day's work, and be quick and clever under difficulties, is a much more satisfactory and suitable mount with the North Durham than a long-striding raking thoroughbred. He must have strength; and the less leg he has with it the better. From the Woodlands foxes are very likely to run up what is generally termed "Lord Bute's country" in the extreme west. Some hundreds of acres of plantation have been laid out here in recent years; and foxes will travel to them from any distance, even from the Durham neighbourhood. The same style of wild grass-and-woodland prevails over the district of Langley and Burnhope (the former being Lord Durham's property); and Greencroft Park is a favourite meet for the same kind of country. Saggerston is one of the largest woodlands—more difficult than most of the others to get away from, but noted for its strong travelling foxes. A run of last season (1882-83) gives a sample of the powers of these western foxes. Finding one of them at Raquetside, near Cornsay, they ran him by Iveston into the Braes of Derwent country—killing him close to Pontop, after

a run that covered nearly twenty miles of country. For the greater part of the journey hounds entirely beat their field; and when at length they ran into their fox, six hounds rolled over the side of a quarry with him—one hound being killed, and others badly injured by the fall.

Brancepeth Castle, rather more to the south (the seat of Lord Boyne, who is a thorough friend of fox-hunting), is, with its parks and coverts, of the greatest service to the Hunt. The woods are chiefly spinnies and belts of timber, through or among which hounds and horses can move quickly and freely. But below Brancepeth and Willington the coal district begins; and foxhunting has once more to face difficulty and entanglement. Occasionally, however, hounds are at Tudhoe; and, again, they may find a fox at Shincliffe and run to Quarrington Woods.

The more open parts of the east of the country are chiefly plough and chiefly hilly; and carry a good scent when the ground rides deepest. On this side are Elemore Hall (the seat of the Baker family), Shatforth; where is a gorse covert from which good runs are often obtained; the wood of Rough Dean, and the gorse of Cherry Knoll (Major Gregson's). Then there are Lord Durham's excellent coverts at Houghton and Pensher—besides a new gorse which he has expressly planted at Herrington, and which must prove of the greatest benefit. Lord Londonderry—who is also a strong supporter of the Hunt—always has foxes at Seaham, close to the sea. Rymer's Moor is a very popular meet in nice open country; and a fox from there is very likely to take a six mile-point to the big

rocky woods of Castle Eden, in the South Durham territory.

To the north the most notable places from a hunting point of view are Hermitage—a good meet and draw, the property of Sir Henry Pottinger—and Ravensworth, where Lord Ravensworth has many great coverts, and foxes always. The meet for the latter is generally Burtley Tollbar, whence hounds often draw also Urpeth and Twizul.

Mr. Anthony Maynard has now held the mastership of the North Durham for just a dozen years—with a pack of which the blood of Lord Eglinton's and Lord Zetland's (or rather Mr. Cradock's) kennels laid the chief foundation. His hounds are kept at his residence, Newton Hall, two miles from Durham. Monday, Wednesday and Friday are his days of hunting—Wednesday being as a rule given to the east of the country, the other two days to west and north. There are few better preserved countries than the North Durham—as a report of sixty litters of cubs in the present summer would seem amply to prove.

BRAES OF DERWENT.*

The south bank of the Tyne hardly carries with it the appearance or atmosphere of a locality specially suited to foxhunting—nor, till you get some miles west of the great smoky city of Newcastle, can it be made to lend itself in any way to such a purpose. Ironworks, coalmines, and an almost continuous town, the habitation of working hands and their belongings, leave space for nothing more unromantic than toil and money making, nothing more exhilarating than the fiery and dingy breath of the ceaseless furnaces. But the dark area of smoke and dirt by the riverside gradually narrows; and the rough, steep, hillside in the background rolls upward to a fresher atmosphere and an open country—to be succeeded by other lofty hills and other deep valleys in wide and rapid succession. Often and again more coalpits, works, and wagonways mark and mar the already rough face of nature; but the fox can be hunted and men can ride in the pursuit. There is ample covert for him, too, in the thickly wooded ravines, through which the various burns find their way to the Tyne. The chief

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 2, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

of these streams (the Derwent) in itself rises to the dignity of a river; and, working along the south and east of the country through a deep and scarcely broken chain of woodland, practically hems the country in between itself and the main river. (This Derwent is not to be confused with the other stream of that name, which, rising close to Scarboro', runs fantastically inland into the heart of Yorkshire.) The rivers, brooks and burns, with their wooded banks, form a perfect labyrinth over a great part of the Braes of Derwent country; and foxes often run from one to the other in the same natural and persistent fashion that they are prone to adopt among the valleys and coombes of Devon. They would seem to have a pronounced dislike to the best of the open hills, where there is little or nothing to hide them from the keen vision of a huntsman. As it is, the latter may often score a point by keeping an eye forward, getting a view across a wide valley, and making the best of an advantage that is legitimate enough on a bad scenting day. To lift hounds frequently amid the braes of Derwent would be quite as impossible as impolitic; for, a great part of their time the pack is working through covert alone and out of reach. Under such circumstances tongue is quite one of the most important attributes of the hound—and, indeed, he is worse than useless without it. Impressed by the obvious need of a more than ordinary cry in such a country, the present Master, Colonel Cowen of Blaydon Burn, has long made extensive use of the bloodhound strain for his pack. At home he keeps a certain number of bloodhounds of a very old and pure breed,

and of an active sort quite different from the heavy, distorted specimens of ugliness that find favour in the south. While free from the lumber and ungainliness of the latter, they are equally clear of the reproach of sullenness in the field or of dwelling in needless uproar on the line. At the same time they have a tremendous note, which, in a cross with the foxhound, is transmitted to their progeny. The first cross is generally the most successful (as it is said to be in the case of the rough Welsh hound with the English foxhound), subsequent breeding tending rather to perpetuate inherent faults of either side than to remove them. With a few couple of these hard-running, loud-tongued, hybrids in the pack, and the rest of the hounds also bred to take their part in the music, there is seldom any difficulty in knowing in which direction the chase is proceeding, even among the deep extensive woods of the Braes of Derwent. Should they force their fox over the brows and drive him across the well-tilled uplands, there is little or nothing to prevent a good rider having a cheery gallop with them. The fences are plain and tolerably easy jumps—chiefly hedges and light timber, of the class that holds good in Northumberland and Durham generally. Most of the land is under the plough—though grass fields come in here and there, more often in the form of temporary seed. After plenty of rain it will often hold a good scent—though those who know it best do not claim for it the character of "a fine scenting country." Though the upland is so readily crossed, the valleys call for both caution and experience. Scarcely one of these

rushing burns but has many treacherous spots on its banks, wherein horse and rider may be left floundering, if they try to cross haphazard. And, besides the bogs by the waterside, the banks of the ravines through which the water flows are often deep, rocky, and perhaps precipitous. Witness the bed of the Derwent about Muggleswick, where the sides of the glen are eighty or ninety feet high, and present a continuous precipice for some two miles. This of course is an exceptional and the largest instance; but in a lesser degree is by no means unknown elsewhere.

About Whitonstall and the higher ground of the west, stone walls come in to vary the fences. And from Whitonstall to, and about, Newlands is considered the best scenting and the most open ground of the Hunt. The hills are everywhere rather severe, though very rideable. The great woodlands of Minster Acre, just beyond Whitonstall and the property of Mr. H. C. Silvertop, are drawn by the Tynedale as well as by the Braes of Derwent—a friendly argument being constantly maintained as to the exclusive right of the latter to all coverts south of the Tyne. Whatever may be the *pros* and *cons* they are never very stoutly urged. The Tynedale are content to rest upon the privilege of time and custom; and the Braes of Derwent have too many coverts in their undisputed possession to make it worth their while to protest. Were the matter the other way, and some of the favoured country of the Tynedale in dispute between them, the subject might demand more attention. For they of the Braes often gaze very wistfully across the Tyne—and point with candid envy to the smaller coverts and smoother land

of their opposite neighbours. "*There,*" they remark in self-depreciating sadness, "it is easy enough to force a fox out of a single little wood, and if he should reach another it is only to be pushed out again, probably in view of the whip who has galloped round. Now, with us he never need leave woodland—and very often won't." Another point on which they will descant with fervent and mournful eloquence is the number of old disused coalpits which honeycomb the ground in so many districts. Foxes burrow their way into the old workings; and it is quite impossible to stop them out. Once in, they may ramble half a mile into the bowels of the earth—and there is always a certain amount of danger of hounds plunging in after them. An old coalmine is a very favourite breeding place—as instanced within a field or two of the Master's residence, where a litter of cubs has been reared in a coal shaft for some years in succession. Of course this profusion of open earths all over the country renders the killing of foxes most difficult; though the Hunt has little to complain of in the stock usually to be found. Coalmines in full action are also still at work in various directions—notably up the valley of the Derwent, where they are to be met with at least as far as Consett.

But in spite of all these difficulties and drawbacks a great deal of sport is earned; and is heartily appreciated by men to whom the cry of a hound is music under all circumstances. Colonel Cowen, the present Master, has held the reins of office for eleven years—previous to which his brother Mr. W. Cowen had them for twenty. The origin of the pack dates back at least

a hundred years, when Mr. Anthony Humble of Prudhoe (whose family is still represented in that village) first started hounds. The same blood was carefully maintained by his successors, until, about seven years ago, dumb madness broke out, and the entire pack had to be destroyed. The catastrophe occurred very shortly before the commencement of the hunting season; but the neighbouring Masters (Lord Zetland, Major Browne, Mr. G. Fenwick, Mr. J. Cookson, &c.) at once came unsolicited to the rescue; and within three weeks Colonel Cowen was set going again with more hounds than he had before. His present Kennels are at Coalburn, about four miles from Blaydon by the Tyne: and in a good position for the country.

Some of the principal chains of woodland run as follows: The great and well preserved woods of Minster Acres adjoin those of Mr. Ormston of Healy, who has planted a large circle of covert extending over an area of hundreds—almost thousands—of acres. From the Tyne up the rugged valley of the Devil's Water runs Dipton Wood; and, in fact, all up the far west of the country, by Slaley, &c., wood follows wood in close succession. Fir and larch are the chief material to form them; and foxes are plentiful all over the west. In the same way woodlands run the whole length of the Derwent, commencing on the moorlands of Edmondbyers. Continuing past Muggleswick, like coverts are found on the Shotley Hall estate, as also by Pontop and Hamsterley (the property of Miss Surtees, a direct descendant of the wittiest of sporting writers) to Chopwell (where are some eleven hundred acres of covert in the hands of the Commis-

sioners of Woods and Forests) and Gibside (the residence of Mr. J. Bowes). Just over the Hill are Lord Ravensworth's coverts—many of which he gives to the Braes of Derwent to draw, others to the North Durham. Blaydon Burn forms another wooded glen, past the residence of the Master; and Stanley Burn is very similar, while about Winlaton there is enough woodland to last an entire day.

Wednesday and Saturday are the hunting days; and are fixed as convenience may suggest. The direction in which hounds are likely to draw is however pretty well established by custom—and seldom takes by surprise the small field that joins them. The following few meets will serve as leading samples—to the west, Shotley Bridge, Ebchester, Whitonstall and Hedley-on-the-Hill; down the Derwent, Black Hall, Lintzford, Rowlands Gill, and The Spen; near the Tyne, Prudoe and Crawcook.

THE RADNORSHIRE AND WEST HEREFORD.*

Among the several very sporting, though avowedly rather rough, countries on the outskirts of Wales, by no means the worst is the one bearing the above title. Its dingles are much less plentiful—and of a much milder type—and its woods are far less awesome, than those of some of its neighbours; while its hills, though lofty, are in most instances smoothly sloped and readily surmounted. Not that it is all hill; for West Hereford has a level and goodly vale, and then some quietly rising ground to meet the more vigorous outlines of Radnorshire. The Kennels, and the Master's house, at Castle Weir, near Titley, are situated on this intermediate slope—overlooking the level vale that stretches right and left at its feet from the Arrow to the Wye, and that is bounded in the westward distance by the wooded heights of Ladylift and other strongholds of the North Herefordshire. To the rear of the kennels, the country undulates easily and openly in grass and plough, till it nears the Radnorshire frontier. Before reaching it, the highest ground encountered is

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 14, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

on the hills of Bradnor to the north of Kington, and Hargest to the southwest. Stanner, which marks the border line of the two counties, has a rocky hillside of quite a different nature; and, though a small stretch of valley opens beyond, you are now fairly in Wales; with mountains and moorland, and names with many consonants, looming in the near distance. To the northward—above New Radnor—foxhunting is vigorously carried on, over hilltop and heather to the confines of The United country. Radnor Forest, indeed, is very popular ground with the Hunt under notice. The heather always carries a scent; the upper ground affords excellent riding. A few bogs may exist on the summit; but a Radnorshire man does not often find himself engulfed in a bog. Wire stretches here and there over the sheepwalks of the Forest; but its ways are pretty well known, and its intervals easily arrived at. Altogether the Radnor Forest is very similar to the forest of Clun in the neighbouring country. But wherever heather-line is approached wire fences are put up on the sheepwalks; as, for instance, on the comparatively low summit of Gladestry-hill. To the south of this—and of Colva, where foxes always live, though often difficult to find—the country is rougher, higher and wilder, till it gradually becomes altogether unhuntable. Still hounds go frequently across the Wye into the Bredwardine neighbourhood; and seldom fail to find a bold travelling fox in keeping with the wild district beyond. As often as not he will make his point across the highland right away to the Black Mountain—a great rough height overlooking the South Herefordshire country. Thus, curiously

enough, the Radnorshire-and-West-Hereford lies between two great landmarks with very similar names, to wit, the Black Mountain on the south, and (some three miles outside its boundary) the Black Hill, by Clun, on the north. Moreover a third Black Hill, by Aymestrey on the river Lugg, marks its eastern limits.

But to return to Radnor Forest, a great resort for spring and autumn hunting. Besides various patches of gorse, a great mass of covert (some seven or eight hundred acres) exist there under the name of Radnor Forest Wood—owning, however, only a small proportion of thick undergrowth—the main part being hollow woodland, through which hounds and horses make their way very readily. Its foxes, too, are very willing travellers; and will often go great distances. All the country round the town of New Radnor is, by the way—though hilly—very good going. There are a certain number of dingles; but the hillsides are excellent galloping, with open heather on most of the summits—as is the case also about Hargest and Gladestry—and the coverts are anything but massive till the Forest Wood is reached. Not far from this, however, come the great woodlands of the Hunt—the Presteigne Woods being as much a feature of the country as is the Pembridge (or west Hereford) vale above-mentioned. From the immediate vicinity of Presteigne run at least three miles of woodland under various denominations, belonging to several different owners, and having branches in several directions. A great part of it comes under the heading of Nash Wood; but it extends under one title or another as far as Burva Camp. Mr. Evelyn, Mr. Bevan, and Sir

John Walsham are, perhaps, the principal owners; and all of them are content to make it a home for foxes. From Nash Wood to Radnor Forest is about a four mile gallop at the most, but over tolerably level and rather favourite ground. Still farther north, Pillith marks another hilly, but sporting and open district, cultivated everywhere except on the hilltops, which are generally covered with heather, fern, and patches of gorse. Similar country extends to Knighton, which is nearly the junction-point with the Ludlow and The United; and about Willey is the same kind of ground, with some good oak woods which always hold foxes. Lingen Vallets and Coles Hill are excellent coverts of larch and gorse in a wild open country, and belong to Mr. Evelyn. The former clothes two sides of a hill, and is consequently often difficult to get away from—though many a good run has taken place thence into the Ludlow country. Wapley Hill is a great landmark on the northern edge of the Pembridge vale. Its summit carries an extensive rabbit warren; but Coombe Wood (also the property of Mr. Evelyn) is its main covert. From the top of Wapley Hill a more comprehensive view of the country is to be had than from any other point—though there are several eminences from which on a clear day the configuration of the landscape is to be easily and widely followed. Shobdon (Lord Bateman's) is another large property close at hand; and the Stanton Park estate, still nearer the Kennels, has several small coverts, which both Capt. King-King, and his brother Mr. W. King-King hold carefully to the good of foxhunting.

It should be mentioned that in the Pembridge Vale a very useful covert has long been lent by the North Hereford Hunt, viz., Heath Wood, from which many capital runs have dated. Other good coverts in the vale are Sarnesfield Wood (Major Worswick's), and Moorhouse Coppice. The latter is a large and strong wood close under Lady-Lift, is the property of Mr. Peploe; and is the most easterly meet of the Hunt.

This Pembridge vale is as pretty riding ground as is to be found in the county of Hereford. A good deal of it is grass; and the fences are everywhere practicable to a clever horse. In some parts, where the clay is stiff and the soil rich enough to feed the grand red bullocks, the hedges grow wide and ragged and the ditches are dug exceptionally deep. The deeper the ditch the higher the bank upon which the thorns are planted; and so—though the banks are in themselves insignificant as compared with those of Ireland or Somerset—there are many fences in the vale that few, if any, horses could take in their stride. One educated to the county will, especially if the ditch be towards him, pitch on the bank among the thorn or hazel, and make his way out with a second spring—dropping only his hindlegs if going fast, or poising to extricate himself where exigency demands and time allows. The fences are very seldom cut-and-laid; so there are no binders to entangle him, though the gaps are mended with wattle as strong and unyielding as any timber. Elsewhere the ditches are of very trifling dimensions; but it nearly always happens that a Herefordshire fence has a different level of ground on either side of it. The horse that under-

stands this, and is in the habit of doing his jump in two, will save himself a great deal of unnecessary exertion—a remark that applies in regard to the hills even more than to the lower country. A strong horse and a clever jumper is accordingly the best mount. There are none too many coverts in the vale; and those that exist are in a great measure dependent on the amount of work bestowed upon the opposite hill coverts of the North Herefordshire, to wit, Lady-Lift, the Wormsley Hills, &c. If these latter are not constantly rattled, the vale foxes will accumulate and remain in them, and sport in the vale comes comparatively to a standstill.

By no means the whole of the Radnor-and-West-Hereford country can be said to be thoroughly good scenting ground. The most consistent scent is found on the heather of the upper country; but even here it is often marred and interrupted by the presence of fern—which huntsmen are accustomed to regard as one of their worst enemies on the hills of the Welsh border. The hilly woodlands, on the other hand, present nothing like the difficulty that one would at first suppose; for not only are they as a rule tolerably hollow and easy for hounds, but a huntsman, keeping on the higher ground, is really in a better position to hear and follow his pack on a fox than in a dense level wood.

Coverts of considerable consequence in the vicinity of the vale are Highmoor Wood, in the Bollingham district; and Cwmma Moor, with no rides, and altogether impassable to horses. Below and about Bollingham the country is all rising ground, partly in

grass, partly under the plough. Of the country due west of the Kennels, and already referred to, Stanner Rocks and the Devil's Garden represent—as the names will easily allow one to believe—the roughest draws of the Hunt. On Gladestry Hill hounds try for their fox among the heather; and they also go to the Black Yalt coverts (Sir Gilbert Lewis') and to Red Wood, a good covert of Lord Ormathwaite's just beyond Huntington. On Knil Garaway (a continuation of Bradnor Hill) is Knill Gorse; and between here and the big woods of Nash, &c., is Eywood (the property of Mr. Bacon, an excellent friend to the Hunt). One of the best of their coverts too, and just south of the Kennels, is Lynhales. This has for the last twenty years belonged to Mr. S. Robinson; and no pains have been spared to render it of value to the Hunt. Down by the Wye, again, are two excellent little coverts of Capt Downs'.

Monday and Friday are the hunting days—the former being more usually for the hills, the latter for the low country. The opening meet is always Castle Weir, the residence of the Master. Other meets with a view to the low country are Newport, Cwmma Moor, Letton Court for Tin Hill, &c., Sarnsfield Oak for Sarnsfield Coppice, and Bredwardine across the Wye. On the hills are Eywood, Lingen for Lingen Vallets, Norton, Pillith for the northern hills, Radnor Forest Wood, Griffin Lloyd for Mr. Wayman's good gorse, &c., Stanner, New Radnor, Gladestry, and Huntington, while in the spring they will meet as far on the moors as Rhosgouk and Pain's Castle.

Colonel Price has now kept hounds at Castle Weir

for sixteen years; and was the first to unite Radnorshire and West Hereford as one country. Previous to this, West Hereford had been altogether unhunted for many years—though the Radnorshire or "hill country" has for the last century either maintained hounds of its own or been visited by the United. For some years previous to the commencement of Colonel Price's mastership, Captain Bevan had hounds at Presteigne. But, according to an old volume which is held as an authority on local matters, "the first account of the maintenance or keeping of a pack of hounds (consisting of twenty couple) by subscription in the town of Kington is dated 1777, when Mr. Robert Whitcombe, a wealthy inhabitant, was treasurer and chief conductor of the hunt. Messrs. Stephens, Thomas King, James King, George Cornwall, M. Bridges, John Harley, and William Back, the vicar, and others formed the hunting Company. Mr. Whitcombe was to find a good huntsman, and provide uniform *and a suitable horse.*"

Colonel Price has carried the horn himself for the last nine seasons, and with every success. As a bold and exceptionally fine horseman, too, he is known far beyond the precincts of his own country. His hounds are of a small, but sturdy and well shaped, sort; and have a high reputation for work. The blood of The Radnorshire Brewer of years ago is still quoted with satisfaction in the books of more than one neighbouring pack. At home his descendants are often mated with the pure Welsh hound—so noted for power of tongue. On the opening day of last season ('82, '83) the members of the Hunt presented their indefatigable

and popular Master with a portrait of himself on the "good grey mare" with four of his favourite hounds grouped round her.

The occasions on which men look for their best runs with these hounds are when they find a hill fox in the low country and run him home. A few seasons ago, for instance, they ran the same fox twice—each time a thirteen-mile point for Moley Wood to the Craigie Rocks, almost field for field. And on both occasions he beat them.

THE MONMOUTHSHIRE.*

ABERGAVENNY is the basepoint of the Momouthshire Hunt—the kennels of the town lying at the feet of impossibility. Blorenge Mountains just behind might, with all their rugged height, fail of themselves to forbid foxhunting; but collieries and ironworks step in a few miles westward, and mountain-ward, and entirely cut off a country that a Welsh-taught foxhound might otherwise make light of. For mountains in Monmouthshire are but as molehills in Cheshire, and a high bred hound accustomed to the former is just as good a climber as a fox, on the same principle of contrariety, possibly, as makes Londoners the best mountaineers. A foxhound in good condition is not only just as active as his enemy in surmounting rough ground and steep ascents, but is much more enduring—and the scene of a fox lying dead-blown on a rocky ledge, while hounds jump noisily and vigorously at him from below, is not at all uncommon. The hills hunted by the Monmouthshire are by no means rocky as a rule: but on the great Skyrrid—or, as it is more often termed, the Holy Mountain—there are sheer

* *Vide* Stanford's "Hunting Map," Sheet 14, and Hobson's Foxhunting Atlas.

cliffs, over which hounds have more than once rushed to their destruction in the heat of chase. But elsewhere the hills are not only climbable but rideable. Men hesitate to leave the top till quite assured that hounds are away from the range on which they stand: then they will race down its face at a speed that will terrify a new comer from the plains. Horses seldom, if ever, fall when urged downhill at this "breakneck" pace—which furnishes the best proof of the safety of the practice. Coming up again is a toilsome and somewhat prosy process. Hounds never seem to be going so fast as when they are streaming gaily away from you over a brow that you are slowly plodding to reach. But to climb a lofty hill directly to its summit seldom pays; and is certainly seldom undertaken by those who know the country, its coverts, and the run of its foxes. The latter know they can look to no Jacob's Ladder to aid them on the extreme upper height; but are sure to bend round the hillside right or left for some ultimate and more tangible point. To decide the direction accurately, is the test put upon men who hunt here—and experience and instinct do marvels in aiding the practised sportsmen of the country. A ride along the sides of the hills, or even across the milder undulations, is pleasant and easy enough. The ground is seldom holding, and a fair proportion of it is laid down in grass; while the fences stop nothing, that will stoop to tread over them—an Irishism meant to convey that care rather than flippancy is becoming to a Monmouthshire hunter. The hedges are low banked, and, where weakest, often times wattled about girth high. Ditches

extant and permanent are comparatively rare; being, more often than not trodden down or ploughed to the surrounding level. For when the first use of the ditch, viz., of supplying material for the hedge bank, has once been served, the two ulterior purposes for which it might be employed—viz., draining the land and herding bullocks—have no place. The ground is too steep and too sound to require artificial drainage; and it is not a bullock country. So a horse that is careful to pick up his feet—and if necessary his shoulders—and that will take pains to discriminate when the unexpected ditch comes before him, is far better than a hunter too lavish of his jumping powers. But he must be able to gallop, downhill, uphill, or on the flat—and muscles and lungs must be well-braced and strong to allow of his doing this creditably through a long run. It is a capital country for hounds; for hounds on a scent can never be ridden over, and nine times out of ten are doing their work clear of the crowd—if a Monmouthshire field can ever be termed a crowd. A good many people hunt; for it is a county in which sporting instincts are naturally inherent to all bred on the soil. Shooting, fishing, foxhunting and otter-hunting are brought prominently in front of both county gentlemen and farmers from earliest youth; and are standing topics from which they cannot altogether escape at dinner table or market ordinary. To their credit be it said that they yield themselves very ready victims to the charms of such subjects—in converse as in daily life. It is a saying in Monmouthshire that has passed into a proverb, and—what is more—has been reduced to practice by

more than one living person (the present Master as an instance), that a man may be at the death of a fox, shoot a grouse or partridge or woodcock, and kill a salmon, all on the same day. The Usk on the west of the country, the Wye and the Monnow on the east, provide salmon and otter; while the heather-topped heights of the Sugarloaf Mountain and its western neighbours are excellent grouse ground. Abergavenny itself—close to which is the Master's residence of Nant Oer—is admirably situated for all these phases of sport. The kennels are at its gates, the Usk runs past its walls, and the grouse hills almost overhang it. On the more huntable side of the country—as opposed to that of the Sugarloaf and the Blorenge Mountains, which lie to the west of the main line of railway from Abergavenny to Hereford—the two most notable features are the Great Skyrrid and the Graig. Some hunting countries are marked out, and can be best defined, by their principal coverts, or by their divisions of grass and plough, hill and vale. The Monmouthshire is best described through the medium of its mountains—the remainder (unless a southern corner can be deemed an exception) consisting of minor undulations connecting the mountains. Below Abergavenny and beyond the Little Skyrrid, is the smoothest ground of the Hunt—the neighbourhood of Langattock, Lanark, &c. Court Robert is an especially favourite place—with no other covert near, and nice undulating ground on all sides. But the country quickly gets rougher as Monmouth is neared. Thus the White Hill is a very formidable place; and Langoven again is rough, hilly, and wooded. But the Great Skyrrid and

the Graig are the two stupendous strongholds for which the foxes of two-thirds of the country almost invariably make. The former—the "Holy Mountain," the Fusiyama of Monmouthshire—is a stupendous hill, with strong covert veiling a great part of its face. Contemplating it from below, the stranger from the plains will probably gasp in silent wonder when told that this towering mass is one of the chief draws of the Monmouthshire foxhounds, and that its wooded and rocky sides are the source of many of their best runs. Yet so it is—and it is extraordinary how frequently, and even readily, they will force their fox away from this awe-inspiring stronghold. From Great Skyrrid to the Graig is some three or four miles of nice riding—the Graig being another lofty and well-wooded stronghold of greater extent than its rival. More good open country lies at its feet to the south and continues to Lanrouthall, beyond which and the River Monnow you soon reach more hill and woodland round Welch Newton. Skenfreth, close adjoining the Graig, is rough; and so is the Wyeside above and below Monmouth. Little Skyrrid is considerable as a hill, but nothing as a mountain. It has on it some excellent covert, the property of the elder Mr. Hanbury Williams (of Coldbrook Hall), the father of the Master; and, besides always having foxes on it, is on the edge of the best of the country. To the Blorenge and Sugarloaf and other western hills hounds go chiefly in the spring. The Devil's Punchbowl—a deep and darkly wooded hollow on the face of the first-named—is a gruesome looking place; and the mountain rises behind and beside it like a brown wall. But it holds

many a fox; and hounds can breast the hill readily after him. Now and again they have brought him back and killed him, while the horsemen have not attempted to rise above the midlevel which the covert marks. On one occasion the pack drove a fox round the back of the mountain into the midst of the collieries, and had him dead beat among the works and buildings. No amount of casting round served to carry hounds a yard beyond the spot on which they had thrown up their heads; and so they were taken home. Afterwards it transpired that the colliers had bagged poor Reynard in his distress, and turned him out the next Sunday morning to bait with their dogs. That he slipped them all, and made good his escape, was a triumph not only to him, but to the cause of good feeling and true sport alike.

Mr. F. Capel Hanbury-Williams has kept the hounds since 1868; and, till the last two or three years, hunted them himself. His pack shows as much quality and excellence, both in kennel and field, as any on the Welsh border. Its breeding has been assisted of late years by sending to the kennels of Lord Fitzhardinge and Lord Hill. The Monmouthshire country is one over which hounds can travel very quickly, as they are generally able to fly the fences in line instead of having to stop and creep. Many of the woods are big; but after Christmas, at all events, hounds can drive through them very readily. Here, as among their neighbours, the matter of tongue, ready and loud, is sturdily insisted upon. Besides dash and style, determination and tongue, another great requisite has to be secured with hounds on the

Monmouthshire hills. This is that they should be absolutely steady and free from riot—and especially proof against the most tempting of all "riot," the mountain sheep. The little red Welsh sheep, half hidden among the ferns, looks anything but unlike a fox—added to which, his scent is as fascinating and beguiling to the nose of a hound as is that of a deer. The temptation once yielded to may easily engender a habit that no amount of whipcord has power to eradicate—and capital punishment will then become the only remedy.

A horse, to live with them or near them, must be strong and fast, and possess all the climbing properties that it is possible to get in him. One talent there is, by the way, which he need have none of—and that is water jumping. Not a brook exists in this or in neighbouring countries of similar character, but the water runs rapidly over a broad stony bed, and may be forded almost anyway. At any rate, where it cannot be forded, it certainly cannot be jumped.

The days of hunting are five in the fortnight—Monday always being one of them; and the following are some of the principal meets and draws: Either The Kennels or Colnbrook Park is the fixture for Little Skyrrid, "Ty Pwlt," &c.; Maindiff Court (the seat of Mr. Crawshay-Bailey) for Werngochen Wood, the Holy Mountain, &c.; Seventh Milestone Grosmont-Road, for Pembiddle Wood, Campston, &c.; Ninth Milestone, ditto for Marlboro' Wood, Trumper's Gorse, &c.; The Cedars-Ewyas-Harold (Capt. R. P. Rees') for Pyke Wood, Dulas coverts, &c.; Pontrilas, on the north of the country, for Paradise Wood, &c.; Dan-y-

Graig (Mr. Godfrey Radcliffe's) for Graig Hill, &c., or, for the same hill coverts, the meet may be The Three-Salmons-Graig or Graig House (Mr. E. K. Mardon's). Blackbrook Lodge is for Coed-y-Pwlt (needless to say, these names are not written from memory!); Skenfrith Bridge for Hell Wood, Cockshult, The Darren, &c.; The Twmp-Rockfield (Mr. Joseph Price's) for Twmp Wood, The Buckholt, &c.; Welch Newton Village for Newton Woods, &c.; Rockfield Village for Rockfield Wood, Perthyra, &c. At the Hendre Mr. J. A. Rolls has kennels for the hounds when they come to draw White Hill—whence they go on to Tre Owen, Llangattock, Trivor, and so on. Wonaston Court (Mr. J. Cannon's), again, is for the south side of White Hill; Troy House (General Somerset's) for Troy Wood; Mitchel Troy Village for Pwlt-y-duon, Cwmcarvan, &c.; Cross Robert Wood for Penlan and Veddw Vaur; Penarth Mill for "The Prysk and Wylpitch; Llansay Cross Roads for Llansay Wood and Coed-y-Gollen; Raglan for Duke's Gorse, Lower House, Penyclawdd, &c.; Tregure for Parc Wood, Bailea, &c.; Llantilio Court (Sir Henry Jackson's) for Mill Wood, Grange Wood, &c.; Half Way House, Tal-y-coed, for Tal-y-coed, Grange, and on over Trothy, Gunter's Wood, Pont-y-ruchen, &c.; Llanarth Court (Mr. J. A. Herbert's) for Coed-y-Gelly, Coed Rohert, &c.; Clytha (Mr. Wm. Herbert's) for Coed-y-Bwnydd, Coed Adam, Ithla, &c.